

Easter Vigil / Easter Sunday (B)

5th April 2015

'The new life of Easter and Baptism'

Acts 10: we have eaten and drunk with Him after His resurrection Ps 117:
This is the work of the Lord, a marvel in our eyes. Col 3: let your thought be on
heavenly things Jn 20: 1-9: *he saw and he believed ...*

The contrast between Good Friday afternoon and this Easter night (day) couldn't be greater, could it? The bare scene of the undecorated church which greeted us yesterday (Friday) as we faced up to the brutal death of Jesus is so different to the decorated, flower-filled, candle-lit church that is before us now. But, then, that's right: the Resurrection is a very very different type of event. It is the difference between perfect love, and violent hatred. The Resurrection is God's quiet, tender, loving answer to man's vicious, bloody, hate-filled treatment of the Saviour. God responds with forgiving love to man's horrific sin. And the beauty of the church this Easter reflects that, with its light, colour, water, and fire. Jesus's death has taken the sting out of all that noisy hatred; and He responds in the quiet of the night with an unseen manifestation of His almighty power over life and death ... He rises from the dead! He overcomes that which man thought was the

ultimate end, mortal death, and shows us that — in Him — is the offer of a life beyond the grave, a risen life. And He shows us, too, that His forgiveness is limitless. However poor a sinner we think we are; however much we feel we have failed God and failed others, yet the Resurrection is the quiet, loving, tender answer that God gives to each of us who has sinned. Despite everything He returns to us with that offer of new life.

A key element of the Easter liturgy, both tonight (last night) and tomorrow (today) is Baptism. Easter and Baptism are strongly linked ... it's why, after the Easter season the Paschal Candle, lit tonight (last night) from the new fire, and burning here as a reminder of the new light of the Resurrection, is moved to stand alongside the font, and is lit for every Baptism through the year. And it's why, more specially, the Easter Vigil is the key time to have the Baptism of adults. Baptism flows from Easter ... Baptism flows from the life that Christ gives us in His Resurrection. No Easter — no Baptism! For Baptism is the dying to an old life, life without Christ, and the rising to a new life in

Christ. Dying He destroyed our death, and rising He restored our life. Baptism is our saying ‘Yes’ to this; ‘yes’ to the fact that true spiritual life — and eternal life — is only available in Jesus who has risen. The Baptismal font is the ‘womb’ in which we are re-born. Life flows from the cleansing waters of Baptism. We thank God for the life that we have received in our Baptism; and we thank God particularly that tonight (last night) two more members are/were added to our number, newly baptized. They make/made their Baptismal promises of the first time, their profession of faith in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; but we also join them in this. We refresh and renew our Baptism this Easter, as we also state our Baptismal Promises; and we are all sprinkled with the newly blessed waters of the font, the same water in which the Baptisms took place. It’s a very special Easter for those being baptized, but we should make sure that Easter is also for us a renewal of our faith. As we are sprinkled with the Easter water, let’s make an act of faith; let’s ask the Lord to refresh us, wash us, and revive us. We cannot live well

without Him; we cannot live eternally without His Resurrection. How dearly and desperately we need our faith ... We need faith like we need water: to live! Our bodies need water; and our souls need faith. Let’s never lose sight of this, and make sure that this Easter we re-commit our lives to Jesus Christ, our love and our life.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Jesus is risen! Along with the whole Church we cry out tonight (today) the Easter *Alleluias!* We are blessed with authentic Easter joy, a joy that cannot pass or fade away, for — just as Jesus’s risen life — it cannot be taken away from us.

Jesus, Lord and Saviour, we adore You in Your holy Resurrection; let us cling to You always; let us know deep down that You and only You can offer us the risen life of eternity. You have overcome our worst enemies, sin and death, Lord. Let us live with You in holiness for ever!