

Easter Sunday (C)

27th March 2016

'The Resurrection of Christ'

Vigil readings ... Rom 6: *we went into the tomb with Him ... we too might live a new life.* Ps 117: *I shall not die, I shall live and recount His deeds.*

Lk 24: 1–12: *He is not here, He has risen.* Or: Jn 20:1–9.

I realised yesterday that this Easter Sunday — 27th March — is my 50th anniversary of Baptism! It's a lovely coincidence, to be able to recall my entry into new life on that day in 1966. I don't think I've ever seen any photos of the day; perhaps there weren't any. All I know is that it took place in relative haste as a result of my great-grandfather's death — my uncle, who is my godfather, was in London for the funeral, and my Baptism was arranged at the same time, whilst he was in town. And I have never once, as an adult, been able to re-visit that church I was baptized in, 50yrs ago, since we lived there such a short time, and the one time I tried to get in in recent years it was locked. But — none of that matters ... what matters is that I was baptized, and began my Christian life! All that springs from Easter is encompassed in the outpouring of new life in Baptism, Confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist ... These sacraments that we might, sadly, just take for granted, since for many of us our receiving them was in our infancy or childhood.

The close connection between Easter and Baptism is

symbolized in all sorts of ways in the Church. For example, the blessing of the font with the Paschal Candle, as the new light of Easter is thrust repeatedly into the font, which is the womb of new life in Christ. The blessed Easter water is sprinkled upon us every Easter after we have solemnly renewed our Baptismal Promises. The Paschal Candle after Eastertide is moved from here in the centre to stand alongside the font, and there it burns for every single Baptism that takes place in the coming year: the newly baptized receive from this Easter Candle their own lighted candle, symbolizing the light of faith in the risen Christ. The Candle also is lit alongside the coffin at every funeral, too, in the coming year, showing that the lamp of faith, lit on their Baptism day, has burned and guided them through life to the very end, and will light their way through death, please God, to eternal life.

For Easter, our beautiful celebration today, is not just about a return to life of one man, even that one man who is the Son of God: it's not just about His defeating death in Himself; it's about us, it's about what He is offering us! For the whole of Jesus ministry, His Death and Resurrection is about us, about giving us life in Him. If He had merely taught the true doctrines He did; performed the great works that He did; and suffered

with heroism the execution that He did ... If that had been it, then it would all have been rather brave, but worthless, and ultimately meaningless. It has meaning, and gives us such joy and a reason for celebration because He comes to life — new, unending life — and offers that to us too.

Our sharing in that life begins in Baptism. Hence all the symbols of life that are associated with Baptism: water, cleansing, pure white garments, lighted candle, forgiveness of sins, new creation! We must never, ever forget our Baptism Day! — please, give thanks now for those who brought you to Baptism, and then nurtured that new life in you towards Confirmation and the Eucharist! Pray in your hearts now for those whose example of life allowed you to know life of Resurrection in Christ Jesus through the Sacraments. We cannot give God enough thanks for their example and faith! For me it was my parents. I thank God for them and my godfather, my uncle, who recently came down from Leeds specially for my big celebration. Who was it for you? Whether they are living still, or have gone to the Lord, let us pray devoutly on this Easter Sunday in thanksgiving for their role in bringing us to Baptism. Maybe they didn't do a very good job of bringing you up in the faith; maybe you have made your own way in response to Christ

... Nevertheless, whoever, and however, they brought you to Baptism, give thanks, because here you are today celebrating the holy Resurrection of Christ Jesus, the meaning and origin of your spiritual life; the very purpose of your life on earth. There may be some of you here today who do not yet share in the Christian life of Baptism; I invite you here and now to pray about that, and to come and talk to me about being baptized: you're here with sufficient faith to want to celebrate Easter; why not come and join the family of the Lord Jesus through His great gift of Baptism? — have a think about it.

Let's all show forth this Easter joy and love, the mercy and the faithfulness, that Jesus deserves from us. This Easter joy is the Good news that the world desperately needs: and we as His people, His army of the baptized, are the ones who must share it. Don't forget your Baptism; don't forget your immense dignity as a baptized Catholic; don't neglect the most important thing in your life, which is your faith in the risen Jesus. As I sang last night at the Easter Vigil: *“May this flame be found still burning by the Morning Star, the one Morning Star who never sets, Christ Your Son, who, coming back from death's domain, has shed His peaceful light on humanity, and lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.”*