

Easter Sunday (A)

12th April 2020

'The Resurrection: hidden yet powerful'

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.*

Mt 28:1–10 *He is not here, He has risen!*

A priest friend of mine was commenting online yesterday, as he got all the elements ready for the Easter Vigil last night — his beautiful Paschal Candle, the font of Easter water to be blessed, his sanctuary decorated with flowers — all for his solo celebration: “sadly, without a congregation,” he said. No-one to see it, no-one to participate physically, visibly. It prompted me to comment, “Well, Jesus rose with no-one to see it, don’t forget that!” And it’s true. The accounts of Easter in the Gospels don’t begin with witnesses to Jesus’s actual rising, or even the appearance of the risen Jesus; they begin with experiences such as an earthquake, and the sight of the empty tomb with the stone rolled back. Because He rose in the dead of the night — who knows at what hour? — unseen by anyone, completely hidden and quiet, delicate and yet powerful. We might recall that, this year, as so many Easter Vigils have been celebrated globally either solo by priests, on in small

numbers. We can bring to mind that the first Easter was a solo affair, totally private to God and the angels! Jesus rose in the night, early Sunday, before daybreak, to get on with that great task ahead of Him, to start building the Church that even then had no idea what awaited them! But even though Easter began so small, its effects have grown and grown, touching the lives of billions ever since: Christians who have declared their faith in Jesus, been baptized into His name, and ordered their lives by the twin principles of love of God and love of neighbour. Something so quiet and hidden that no-one saw, and yet billions have come to believe in and which has become a feature of the earth that cannot be hidden: the reality of Jesus, the Son of God, risen and alive and animating His Church with His all-powerful Spirit of love, prayer, sacrifice, and service.

All this reminds me, then, that although this year the Easter Vigil, and the Easter Sunday Masses have for the most part, across vast parts of the Christian world, had to take place behind closed doors, yet the effects of that celebration cannot be hidden, cannot be contained, or quiet,

or ineffectual! The bursting-forth from the tomb-of-death by Jesus — the divine light of healing and victory that shines forth from His Resurrection — cannot be contained or hidden. The ‘Light of the World’ is still the ‘Light of the World’ even if His people are prevented from gathering in church at Mass: that light is still active, bright, and healing, as it shines from and in the people of God alive in the Spirit! Perhaps we need this extraordinary Easter ‘in isolation’ to remind us of this — that we draw our faith from the risen Jesus, and from His holy sacraments, but we don’t then cease our being His people once we’re not in church. This Easter we are called on to celebrate His Resurrection in other ways, not least by devout prayer at home; by reflecting on the Scripture accounts of this unique and irreplaceable event of Easter: it doesn’t matter which one of the Gospels you take to read about the Resurrection, any one of them treats this event in its final chapter or two; and then go on to start reading the Acts of the Apostles, ... the rapid spread of that life-changing, history-changing Good News for humanity. That first Easter began small, but it spread fast,

and far, because the disciples, the newly-baptized ‘ran with it.’ We are called to ‘run with it’ too, to carry that news of Jesus’s rising from the dead to all those around us who do not have this ‘anchor of hope’ that we have.

May this holy weekend, Easter, be indeed a joyous moment of great hope, trust in God, and powerful prayer offered in the name of Jesus rising up from the face of the earth. As we worship the risen Lord in our hearts, let us ask Him — repeatedly, earnestly, urgently — that this Easter weekend, celebration of His glorious triumph in and for mankind, may mark the turning-point in the world’s sufferings from the virus outbreak. The Son of God. Let’s never forget, through His Resurrection, is King of Kings and Lord of Lords — His is the earth, and all that is holds; in His divine light can the ills of the world be healed. May the whole earth unite this Easter in praise of Jesus, and of His healing, merciful, saving, life-giving light, which gives us a hope that is never defeated by death. *Alleluia, the Lord is truly risen. Alleluia!* Jesus, bless and heal this world You love so much.