

Easter Sunday

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

When the early Christians shared with fellow Jews and then with the people of the Greek-speaking Mediterranean world the *Gospel*/Good News, their priority was to convey the news that Jesus had risen from the dead. They insisted he was Lord. The proclamation of the Gospel started with news of resurrection and worked its way back from there. The one who had risen was the itinerant preacher who had been crucified in Jerusalem, who had taught people about God's love, who confidently insisted that the kingdom of that same God had dawned and who gave signs of what that might mean through healing the sick, casting out evil spirits, preaching a new way of living according to the old Law and who had been recognised by some as having fulfilled the prophecies and being himself the King of the Jews. Crucified by the Roman authorities on Friday and buried in a tomb within hours of his death, three days later a group of women who had known him in Galilee, followed him to Jerusalem and had seen him die on the cross, now insisted three days later that he was alive. The Twelve and other disciples grew in their conviction that Jesus had risen from the dead. Faith in what that momentous resurrection implied from that day forward remained at the heart of what every subsequent generation of those who believed in Jesus as Saviour and Lord cherished as the foundation of all they believed in.

To this day, every Sunday and on major feasts in the Church's year, we Christians profess that that "*for our sake [Jesus] was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.*" Often we forget that Jesus *died*. Jesus experienced death and it was from death that he rose on the third day. Death is very much in all our minds on the occasion of this extraordinary Easter, this Easter without precedent. The mounting toll of mortality which Covid-19 has ushered into the heart of our world forces us, as never before in our generation, to reflect on the capriciousness and the indiscriminate character of death. The greatest antidote to the fear of death which has us in its grip, an experience of death which will have coloured our spiritual journey through the Lord's Passion, is the message of Easter. *He is risen!* Death has been swallowed up in the victory Christ achieved on Calvary. And not only has Jesus risen, he is – as Paul insisted to the early Church – the first born of many brothers.

In this time when we are all struggling to understand the pandemic which has cast such a long shadow on our world, and when the fragile hold which any of us has on life is so cruelly exposed, the news of resurrection and the birth of Jesus into new life on the first Easter Sunday has a resonance without precedent in the memory of any of us currently alive. The truth of Jesus' resurrection only dawned gradually on the women and his first disciples, and it is to be hoped that by making the Easter story our own this year faith in *resurrection of the body and life everlasting* may bring us comfort and joy.

Father Patrick