

Easter Sunday

For most of us this Easter Sunday will be like no other that we have celebrated in the past. We have not been able to go away to our favourite holiday or camping spot. We will not gather around a table with our extended families and friends for a festive Easter meal. And what many of us will miss deeply is the opportunity to gather with other parishioners to celebrate the Lord's Resurrection. Only through our computers, iPads and television screens will we be able to experience the Easter Liturgy and sing our Alleluias.

In whatever way we can we go to the tomb where the body of Jesus was laid on Good Friday afternoon. We go with Mary of Magdala. As John tells the story it was still dark when Mary reached the tomb but to her amazement the stone that had been over the entrance to the tomb had been rolled away. She runs back to tell Peter and the other disciple "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we don't know where they have put him," She tries to interpret the evidence that she saw. The empty tomb could only mean for her that someone had taken the dead body of Jesus out of the tomb. The empty tomb by itself did not and cannot prove that Jesus has risen. More is needed. When Peter and the other disciple come to the tomb, they see the linen cloths. One of them was on the ground, but the one that had been over the face of Jesus was rolled up in a place by itself. Those cloths remind us of what happened when Jesus raised his friend Lazarus from the dead. When he came out of the tomb Jesus told the bystanders, "Unbind him. Let him go free." Jesus had now been unbound from the cloths that had wrapped his dead body. He had been set free from death. Seeing those cloths was enough evidence for the disciple that Jesus loved. "He saw and he believed. Up until this moment they had failed to understand the teaching of scripture, that he must rise from the dead."

Scripture itself interprets the evidence of the empty tomb. But Mary of Magdala and the other disciples did not become convinced that Jesus had risen until they saw Jesus alive in their midst. Over the next few weeks, we are going to experience the risen Jesus appearing to his disciples.

I have often wondered why in Matthew's gospel Jesus makes such a point of meeting his disciples again in Galilee. Perhaps it is because that was where he first met them. Some of them made their living fishing in the Sea of Galilee. For all of his first disciples Galilee was home. And perhaps that is what Jesus is saying to us today. I want to meet you again in the place where you first met me. I want you to know that I am with you in your family, among your friends, in the places where you live and work. I want you to discover me again alive in those people who love you. I want you to experience my risen presence in the people who care for you.

This Easter when we are spending so much time at home with other members of our family, we need to hear that Jesus is there with us. He is inviting us to discover anew how He is present in those we love and those who love us. Even if we are tested by our physical closeness and we lose it at times, we can experience the joy of forgiveness. We can notice the little things that others do for us that are signs of the love they have for us. Jesus is there for us in every one of those signs of love.

As he says those words to us we know that we are called to play our part in making the Risen Jesus present to other people. We are all called to become the evidence of the Risen Jesus alive in our world today. We are called to be those who draw others to Jesus; who show his compassionate face to those who are longing to see it.

On this day we renew our Baptism promises. We may not be able to do this together as a Church family, but we can do it at home together. We might simply say to one another that we want to renew our love for one another. We might say that we want to live the commitment that we made at our Baptism to be like Jesus. We are committing ourselves to be like Jesus so that He can use us as evidence of his Resurrection.