

OUR LADY, STAR OF THE SEA, WEYMOUTH

HOMILY FOR THE EASTER SUNDAY (YEAR B)

1st April 2018

Acts 10. 34-43; Colossians 3.1-4; John 20. 1-9

There must have been confusion in that early morning darkness as Mary and the disciples approached the tomb. And then they really didn't know how to react, indeed in the Gospel we are told that they didn't understand the Scriptures. We are not told which Scripture, but just that when they did go into the tomb, they may still not have understood, but they saw and they believed.

What did they see? In the early morning light, they saw a nearly empty tomb. What were their initial thoughts? Fear? Dismay? Then they saw the linen cloth folded on the ground, and a clear detail that the one from around Jesus head was rolled up on a shelf. And they believed.

What did they believe? They believed that Jesus had done what he had told them he would do. Yes, he had died, but now he had risen from the dead! He had overcome death itself.

What a journey they had had those past 3 years! Living and breathing and eating with Jesus; God himself! They had shared the last supper with him, when he gave them his body (when he instituted the Eucharist) They walked to Gethsemane with him, where he sweated drops of blood he was so disturbed – and they fell asleep! Then they had seen their loved friend and teacher brutally whipped and beaten. The flays from the whips would have taken chunks of flesh and muscle from his body...as Isaiah writes, he was so deformed he was hardly recognisable as a person. Then he was nailed onto a cross and died. And now, miraculously he was alive!

We have also had a journey, through Lent. But especially over the Triduum. If you didn't make it this year, please try next year – unless we provide ourselves with focused quiet time, it can be hard to hear the message in our heart. This year, on Maundy Thursday, I, amongst my friends here, celebrated the last Supper. Then, we "walked" through the church to our homemade garden of Gethsemane. And I sat there, contemplating the scene. And I found myself, a grown 54-year-old man, quietly crying. Initially, this was for my mum who recently died. You see, for her last year or so, her body too wasn't hers. In a sort of parallel, when I looked at her I knew who it was, but like Jesus body, hers was "deformed". But with these tears I also had a sense of peace, as I knew she was now with our Lord; safe and rejoicing.

Then, partly due to the silence and opportunity to reflect, I found myself crying for Jesus. I had a small awareness of the depth of immeasurable suffering he went through – and he did this for me. For me! He also of course did this for you. Then I considered the crucifix, Jesus arms open wide, an icon showing that Jesus did this for every person. It's easy to look at a cross and miss the enormity of what he went through. This is a love that is desperately wanting to give itself to everyone.

Finally, I cried for one of my son's friends who recently committed suicide. What depth of despair that must have led to this. And I recalled Jesus apparent despair on the cross. But this is coupled with his resurrection. And I found myself at peace. Only God can judge us; I don't know what happens to individuals when they die. But I did sense that this love from Jesus is extraordinary and beyond our comprehension. And if he would suffer and die in the manner he did; then his love is there for all, and it is immense.

And please, if there is anyone here feeling that you can't go on, especially you youngsters – this is becoming far too common in our youngsters – talk to your friends or family. As Christians we have a duty to share the love we have been given with those who are suffering. So, talk to each other, and support each other.

Moving on. Consider what Peter says in Acts of the Apostles. He is preaching to Cornelius, who most Jews would have considered to be effectively separated from God as a Roman soldier. Yet Peter simply preaches the “kerygma”. That is, the basic facts of the Gospel. God is real. He loves us. Jesus is both God and God's Son. He came to earth; died for us to “save us from our sins”. He rose from the dead. And as a result, we are saved. We are free. We are set right with God!

And Jesus, Peter tells us, has been appointed judge of the living and the dead. And we have just glimpsed a little of the depth of that love – for you, me, everyone. Peter also says “whoever believes in Jesus will have their sins forgiven through his name”. That's quite a statement from the man Jesus gave to lead his Church. This is amazingly good news.

And it doesn't stop there. Mary and the disciples were witnesses to a “new dawn”. We are witness to a new dawn. We often hear Jesus died for our sins. Let's also remember he rose for our lives! Romans 4.25 tells us “Jesus was raised for our justification”! Somehow, he dies to free us from our sins, and is raised to set us right with God. We have new life right now. Anyone who has been baptised has “died and risen with Christ”! The resurrection of Jesus is so much more than just Christ risen, it is a celebration of his life within us.

Like those first disciples, we may be reluctant to embrace the power of the risen Jesus in our own lives. Yet this is what we have. We have the love and power of the real God and person of Jesus Christ living within us.

This is a gift beyond measure. It is good news beyond measure. You and I are justified through Christ. So, let's contemplate the depth of that love. Let's somehow realise we can rejoice through Jesus suffering, since it tells us (if we will contemplate this) how deeply we are loved. Whether or not you feel worthy, whether or not life is good or you are suffering, you are loved beyond your comprehension. We are loved not for what we may do or achieve, but simply because we are loved.

Let's tell the world. God bless you all.

Rev Jonathan de Kretser