

A Homily for Easter Sunday 2020 from Fr Allan

First of all a very Happy Easter to you all. May the blessings of this holy season come to you and your families.

Yes, this IS the most unusual Easter ever. We are not simply used to it and we may feel that we can't celebrate it properly. Our belief in God may be rocked to the core. However, others may find that their "I believe in one God" is strengthened and becomes more intense. We must know that even though we may be separated from one another and from our Eucharistic Community, God is very much with us. God brings us peace and continues to love us. God hasn't given up on us. He is not done with us and so, yes, we can celebrate Easter.

At this time I am thinking especially of Denise, Sarah, Ana, Neo and Gareth who were to be baptised at the Easter Vigil. I am very much aware that this is a cause of sadness for them even though they may have resigned themselves to the current situation. For a while now they have been on a journey of faith and, since they have joined our faith community, we have been making that journey with them. Hopefully it won't be too long before they are baptised.

During Lent their journey "went up a gear". They were welcomed into a period of intense prayer. The thinking behind this was that they will grow in closeness to God just as OUR Lenten observances would bring US closer to God also.

They were helped in this journey by the three great scripture passages from St John - the Samaritan Woman, the Man Born Blind and the Raising of Lazarus. These were all stories of people who grew to know and love Jesus. This pattern is continued on this Easter Day with the account of Mary Magdalen's visit to the tomb. She too is on a journey. Her journey takes her from the dark to the light. Mgr Robert Draper from the Diocese of Plymouth reminds us that she sets out while it was still dark. She is literally in the dark but perhaps she is also in the dark because she still hasn't understood what has happened in Jerusalem over these past few days.

She returns to Peter and John to tell them that the tomb is empty. They then make their own journey. We are told that it is John, the beloved disciple who arrives at the tomb first. He however, defers to Peter's authority and allows him to enter. It is only when John goes in that his words are recorded. We are told "he saw and he believed". The beloved disciple has made the journey to belief even though he hasn't seen the Risen Lord. John will spend the rest of the gospel commenting on this. Later on Jesus will say to Thomas, "You believe because you have seen me. Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe". John lets us know that the reason he has written his gospel is "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this you may have life through his name".

All of us, wherever we are, are invited to continue our own journey of faith - to move from the dark of not knowing into the light of faith. For us the resurrection of Jesus Christ is totally new. It is unlike any other story of someone who has died and come back to life. It is unlike any myth. The resurrection uses a completely different language. It is situated in a definite particular time and place. It involves real historical people. The disciples go to great pains to let us know that from now on nothing will be the same again. Jesus' new, resurrected life is not accompanied by vengeance against those responsible for his death. His first words to his disciples are "Peace be with you". Again, this is an unusual way to greet them. It sets the

tone for the way his followers are to conduct their lives with others. Peace, not violence, retribution or violence, must be the measure of the life of a Christian.

All of this takes place within the context of the Jewish Passover. The resurrection is surrounded by memories of liberation and freedom. It points to the fact that God really wants the best for us - for our happiness. God wants to be involved in our lives. God does care and hasn't given up on us. This is why we celebrate even in this time of pandemic.

A VERY BIG "THANK YOU" TO YOU ALL

Some of you may have seen the children's drawings for Holy Week and Easter. They are terrific! They show that they have a real understanding of what this special time is all about. They give us all something to think about. Thank you everyone - including mums and dads!

I would also like to thank all of you who contribute so much to the life of our parishes of All Hallows and St Dyfrig's.

Thank you to all those involved with the ministry of the altar - the altar servers, the Eucharistic Ministers, The Readers, the choirs and organists, the music group and band, the flower arrangers, the sacristans, those who launder the altar linen, those who clean the candlesticks, the Columbarium, the Adoration/Exposition groups, the cleaners, the collectors, the welcomers and those who give out the newsletters and hymnbooks.

Thank you to all those involved with Sacramental Preparation - Baptism, First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion, Confirmation, the Parish Registrar, the Children's Liturgy. Thank you to those who look after the Piety Stall and the Catholic papers.

Thank you to all those who are involved in the ministry of administration - those who work in the office, those who write, type and produce the newsletters and other documents, the counters and book keepers, the finance committees, those who look after the website and social media, those who care for our parish halls. and our handymen, those who open close our churches and gates.

Thank you to all those involved with the charitable outreach of the parishes - the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, the Union of Catholic Mothers, those who see to the Foodbanks, the Visiting Group, the SPUC organisers.

Thank you to all those involved in fundraising and the social life of the parishes - the fundraising group, the Hall Group/Committee, the Grants Committee, those who organise the social events, ladies evenings, jumble sales and table top sales, dinners and buffets.

In these times of coronavirus thanks must also go to those who have reached out through phone calls and emails to the vulnerable, the elderly and lonely. Thank you to those who have taken shopping and collected prescriptions. My prayers go out to all key workers and especially to those working in the National Health Service.

May God Bless you all.

Fr Allan