

BULLETIN NO. 5 - EASTER

FR. JOHN WRITES

Dear Brothers and Sister,

CHRIST IS RISEN ALLELUIA!

HE IS RISEN INDEED ALLELUIA!

This ancient Easter greeting, still used as a wakeup call in many Religious Houses to this day, sums up our Christian faith. In St John's Gospel we read in chapter 20. That very early on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb, she wanted to anoint the body of Jesus, she wanted to spend time tending his grave, to spend time with him. We can understand this, anyone who has lost a loved one knows the need to be physically near them, to see them, to touch them, its all part of the normal bereaving process, which is something denied many people at this time. We know that Mary Magdalene did not find what she was looking for, the dead Jesus, she found an empty tomb. Scandalised, for she thought grave robbers had struck, she goes to Peter and the Beloved Disciple, who run to the tomb to see for themselves. Later that morning Mary is rewarded when she meets with the Risen Lord, who recognises him only when he calls her by her name. Later that day the disciples, except Thomas, huddled together in the Upper Room also meet with the Risen Jesus, they are then able to say Christ is Risen! Notice that they believe not on the evidence of the empty tomb, but because they encounter the Risen Lord Jesus in their lives.

This year after a Holy Week and Lent like no other any of us have ever known. When many are feeling the pain of isolation, the fear of what might be, the suffering of the virus, or mourning the effects of it on our loved ones. We now celebrate this feast of feasts, this day made by The Lord, the day He arose from the dead. Yet like the first disciples, we find him not in empty tombs or churches for that matter, but in His living presence among us. This Easter Sunday we will not be able to celebrate Mass together in church, but we can be together through prayer. Each of us can bring ourselves, our loved ones, our neighbours into the presence of the Risen Jesus. We can if we but open our hearts to Him anew, experience this very day His loving, saving, soothing presence. Then we will say with great conviction, and despite all else around us:-

CHRIST IS RISEN ALLELUIA!

HE IS RISEN INDEED ALLELUIA!

Cardinal Nichols has recorded a special radio programme for the BBC on Easter Sunday. This will be broadcast at 0800 on all 39 BBC local radio stations. It will not be broadcast on BBC Radio 4, which will be broadcasting its usual Sunday Worship Service at that time.

A PASTORAL LETTER FROM OUR BISHOP ALAN

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The first Holy Week- almost two thousand years ago- saw world-changing events happen with bewildering speed. Jesus received a King's welcome in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, by Friday he had been crucified to death but on Easter Sunday his disciples were proclaiming his Resurrection.

In any other year I would be encouraging you to take time out of your busy schedule and journey with Jesus in the Holy Week Liturgy and in personal prayer, but this year our churches are closed, many of us are confined to our homes and, as one NHS worker grimly remarked, many of us are now living a three day week- yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Yet our Catholic Christian Faith is very clear that whether in times of suffering or joy, light or darkness- 'Fix your thoughts on Jesus the Apostle and High Priest whom we confess... Let us fix our eyes on Jesus the Pioneer and Perfecter of our Faith' (Hebrews 3.1, 12.2).

In the annual rich liturgical and devotional life of the Church this is obvious and can become even routine, but now, in this time of the Covid19 virus, our churches are closed, people are suffering and dying and we are all living in a radically different world.

In that first Holy Week, the last week of our Lord's life on this earth, the first Christians made little sense of what was happening. The apostles fled from Gethsemane, Peter denied Jesus three times and the Lord died almost alone with just his Mother, St John and one or two others.

Easter Sunday changed everything. Mary Magdalen, filled with love for her friend Jesus, went to the tomb to anoint a body; hope and love had triumphed over paralysis and despair. Mary was the first witness to the empty tomb; much more she was, in the words of Saint Thomas Aquinas, the Apostle of the Apostles (Apostolorum Apostola) and she shared her excitement and joy with the apostles.

Every new generation of Christians discovers and proclaims the crucified and risen Lord- 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13.8). In these dark and difficult days of the pandemic Mary Magdalen's longing for life and healing, even when others were plunged into loss and despair, invites all of us to trust God in Christ absolutely.

At His Last Supper our Lord told His disciples, 'I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you... Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them (John 13.15,17). In these challenging days we need to support each other and, especially, look after and pray for the vulnerable and elderly. Our priests are continuing to celebrate Mass for their parishioners and, whenever possible, the Sacraments and other pastoral support are being offered to the people of God. Each and every act of kindness, in imitation of our Lord, reminds us that we are truly blessed by God.

The Holy Father continues to be a source of strength and inspiration - 'In the midst of isolation when we are suffering from a lack of tenderness and chances to meet up, and we experience

the loss of so many things, let us once again listen to the proclamation that saves us: He is risen and is living by our side' (Pope Francis in St Peter's Basilica, 27 March 2020).

I wish you many blessings this coming Easter and in the future,

Devotedly in Christ and Mary,

+Alan Williams, sm

Bishop of Brentwood

Masses in this time of Lockdown of churches

Do try to worship in your home this Easter Sunday, using television, or online streaming, (see our website for links). The Bishop in his letter said that priests continue to say mass for you, that includes your priest. I have turned my spare room into an Oratory and say mass there for your intentions each day. This weeks intentions are: **Sunday – the People of our Parish, Monday - Dan Navin, Tuesday - Jennifer Ryan, Wednesday - Theresa Field, Thursday – NHS and all frontline workers, Friday – Victims of the Coronavirus, Saturday – Jim Birchall, Sunday – the People of our Parish.**

With my love and prayers this Easter

Fr. John Corbyn