

Parish of the Assumption of Our Lady
Old Harlow, Essex CM17 0HA
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BULLETIN B 19 – 4TH APRIL 2021
EASTER SUNDAY

My dear brothers and sisters,

I always find it amazing that Easter, in our hemisphere, comes at spring time. We are surrounded by new life, wherever we look. A good example of this is the willow tree outside my study window, what had until quite recently been a few dead sticks is now lush fresh green shoots gently dancing in the breeze. This year it also coincides with the releasing of the strict lockdown measures. The vaccine rollout has given us all a new hope, and whilst we must all still proceed with caution, there is cause for celebration.

Easter is about the Resurrection of Our Lord, not just celebrating an event in AD 33, but a reality in our lives that we celebrate every Sunday. For all those who are baptised have died with Christ and have Risen to a new life with Him. It is so right that we not only celebrate Baptisms at Easter time, but we also recall our own Baptism. Most of us do not remember our own baptism, we were too young, but for those who are followers of the Lord we experience its effects daily in our lives. On this day we traditionally renew our baptismal vows at all masses, and then the fun of the sprinkling with Holy Water, at least its fun from the priest's point of view! This year we will renew our promises but alas with no sprinkling. However, on Holy Saturday we will for the first time, in this country, be using a new type of Holy Water dispenser, it has a sensor and automatically sprays a small amount of Holy Water when it detects a hand under it. There is no need to touch it so it is totally Covid secure. I say we are the first in this country to have one, but they are in use in all four of the Vatican churches, nothing is too good for Old Harlow. It will be placed at the exit this weekend, but thereafter it will be at the main entrance

I pray that you will experience a Holy and Happy Easter,

Fr. John

TIMES OF MASS THIS WEEK

Sun	4	Easter Sunday	0900 Mass 1100 Mass	Jennifer Ryan (RIP) People of the Parish
Tue	6	Easter Tuesday	1900 Mass	John Hogan (RIP)
Wed	7	Easter Wednesday	1000 Mass 1030 Adoration	Birchall Family (RIP)
Thu	8	Easter Thursday	1000 Mass 1030 Adoration	McLaughlin Family (RIP)
Fri	9	Easter Friday	1000 Mass	Hasledon Family (RIP)
Sun	11	2 nd of Easter	1000 Mass 1800 Mass	People of the Parish Vernem Family (RIP)

CHRIST IS RISEN ALLELUIA!

When preachers are speaking about the resurrection, they will sometimes use the example of the caterpillar turning into a butterfly. The earth-bound creature which crawls about and spends all its time eating leaves appears to die, then emerges transformed from the shell of the chrysalis as a completely different being, complete with coloured wings and able to fly.

However, there is another story about this process which might help us as we reflect today on the central mystery of our Christian faith. A student was conducting research on how the butterfly appears from the chrysalis. She noticed that the insect had to struggle to get out of its protective coat, so decided to help it. She made a small cut in the shell and the butterfly came out very easily, then it promptly collapsed and died. She repeated the experiment with a couple of others and the same thing happened. She thought about the result of her tests and concluded that the struggle was actually an important part of the emerging and survival of the creature: it was the effort to escape which gave the butterfly its energy.

Our Gospel passage today relates the circumstances surrounding the discovery that Jesus' tomb is empty. It opens with the three characters – Mary Magdalene, Simon Peter and the anonymous disciple whom Jesus loved – literally and symbolically in the dark. At the beginning, they do not understand the reason why Jesus' body is missing: at the end, Mary and Peter still do not know, but the unnamed disciple comes to believe. Peter may well have a position of authority and his companion defers to him by allowing him to enter first, but the latter has priority of place in Jesus' love.

There are clues in the text that God has been at work. We are told that “the stone had been moved away” and that the cloth which had been over Jesus' face was “rolled up”: this is a biblical way of expressing divine action. The signs of death – the stone, the cloths – have been deprived of their meaning; the tomb and the cloths are empty. We might contrast this scene with the raising of Lazarus, who is restored to the life he lost; Jesus is now in a different plane of existence altogether. Only John's model “beloved disciple” realises this.

An observation that we sometimes hear in relation to the Easter story is that things began to go wrong in the Church when the male disciples failed to listen to the women who reported that Jesus was risen. This comment is based on the other Gospel accounts, in which the women have been confronted either by angels or by the risen Jesus himself. In John's version, Peter and the other disciple react to Mary Magdalene's report by running to see the tomb for themselves. Mary, apparently, does not yet believe that Jesus is risen. There is an important underlying message: our belief in the resurrection relies on the testimony of those who experienced the risen Jesus for themselves. It is not enough that the apostles and others accept second-hand evidence: they have to preach the Gospel message from personal conviction. No one saw Jesus rise from the dead: the first preachers are witnesses *to* the resurrection; they are not witnesses *of* the resurrection. They have experienced the risen Lord for themselves in those encounters which we refer to as “appearances”. It is on their evidence that our belief in the risen Christ rests.

Today we are invited to renew our baptismal commitment as disciples of Jesus. The character in the fourth Gospel called “the disciple Jesus loved” represents the individual disciple, whoever he or she may be. That person's understanding of Jesus grows in the course of the story. Our understanding of Jesus and our love for him should also continue to grow throughout our lives. This is where the idea of struggle comes in. Our faith is not something static: it has to develop and grow, or it will die. From time to time our present ideas will not be enough anymore and we will have to leave them for a deeper understanding.

HE IS RISEN INDEED ALLELUIA!