

Sermon Easter Day 17.04.22 SL

Alleluia! Christ is Risen He is risen indeed, Alleluia.

The world may well be divided into those who leap out of bed in the morning to face a new day and those who prefer to keep their eyes shut just a little longer- or at least the world of the Rectory in Flood Street is like that. I've never liked waking up, momentarily blinded by the light of a new day.

The Gospel we've just heard suggests that Mary Magdalen was certainly an early riser. Indeed we note that it was still dark, when she went to the tomb. The darkness of night or, perhaps, the darkness of dulled vision. How could Mary Magdalene and the others have been prepared for what they discovered? Their eyes were closed to the possibility that what he had promised might be discernible, visible even. They were trapped, their

eyes could perceive only their loss, their pain, their anger, their grief. The tomb was the horizon of their sight.

Mary's vision, smeared by tears and tiredness, fulfilled the prophecy Matthew had included in his gospel, 'You shall look and look, yet not see'. And that is the Easter Day conundrum we face everyday, that real life is hard to see, to perceive, it is as if we are equipped only to see the surface traces, and not to the heart of the matter. How many times Jesus gives the gift of sight to the blind, and how often we too need this gift – to see the truth. By addressing her in relationship, using her distinctive personhood, her uniqueness, all wrapped up in the phrase 'calling her by her name', Jesus gives Mary Magdalene the gift of insight, the facility to look and

see, the gift of being able to connect the old with the new. In calling her by her name, he makes a bridge for her to cross, to see who he is in all his extraordinary life, which is unstoppable, even in death.

Time and time again in the resurrection narratives, seeing , insight, true opening of our eyes is crucial to understanding both who this Jesus is and how we relate to him as the people we are and how we might relate to him as the people we were created to be. Think of the transformation which occurs in the Upper Room in Jerusalem behind locked doors with frightened disciples, the intimate meal with the two on the talking on the road to Emmaus, the breakfast with old friends on the Galilean lakeside.

With limited sight we plod on, yes, in the rut of our well-worn ways, our views, our expectations, our prejudices, our likes, our dislikes. Yet truly seeing explodes this limitation. Jesus, begs us not to cling on, but to raise our eyes, our sight, to the possible, the new life, the life we share with God the Creator which is about unity and inclusion, about harmony and justice about loving service and compassion.

The old ways are not the only way- we learnt that surely in the isolation of the pandemic, we need to see it in the savagery of war in Ukraine, in the mourning of mothers for their children in Yemen, in the hunger of 80% of the population of Afghanistan, or the tanks on the streets of Yangon vainly attempting to quell a quest for justice. The old ways are not the only way to relate to the homeless in

the doorways on Kings Road or the immoral populism of shunting refugees to Rwanda. The old way, the tearful and tired way is the failure to recognise the risen Christ, the refusal to look into the transforming power of God and become an agent of that same loving change, for we are now that Body of Christ. Not that this annuls the pain and savagery of Good Friday, no, nor does it downplay the suffering of our current world, far from it, but any true Easter encounter is a bridge, a meeting with a stranger, the risen one, who constantly calls and recreates us, allowing our sight to be extended in that dawning knowledge of God's love, being transformed by that stranger into one who sees and perceives the heart of the matter.

And we receive that sight and that commission in this and every eucharist. Together as the Body of Christ we celebrate his presence with us in bread and wine, but it is to each one of us individually and severally that we receive the host, the body of Christ. Our communal gifts of bread and wine are offered and received back in the eucharist- into our own hands, because of our own naming by God in our baptism, that we are to be a community, growing in insight, in understanding of the boundless love of God for all his children. Ours to work out how we use that fuel, that energy, that insight to be God's agents in the world he loves so completely.

Ours now is to live as those who have seen and in that seeing been transformed, like Mary Magdalene

to go and tell, to search out his presence in the world, in the stranger, and in the half-light of this world's pain and loss, building bridges of redeeming love, that all the world may indeed see and know that:

Alleluia Christ is Risen, He is risen indeed alleluia.

BL

13.04.22