

Catholic Parish of Blackfriars

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Year C

Under the care of the Dominican Fathers



VERITAS



HOLY ROSARY CHURCH

Parish Priest
Fr Kieran Adams OP

Assistant Priests
Fr Rafael Cabezon OP
Fr Bernie Maxwell OP

Holy Rosary Church
Cnr Phillip Avenue &
Antill Street, Watson ACT

Postal Address
PO Box 900, Dickson
Ph. 6248 5925

Email: watson@cg.org.au
www.cg.org.au/watson

Office Staff
Jacquie Cortese
Jim Smith

Office Hours
Monday, Tuesday,
Thursday, Friday
9.00am—12.30pm

Parish Council
Andrew Blakey

Mass times
Wed 5.30pm
Tues & Thurs 6.45am
Fri 5.30pm

Saturday 5pm (Vigil)
Sunday 8am, 10am & 5pm

9am Mass Saturday & Public
Holidays
excluding Mondays

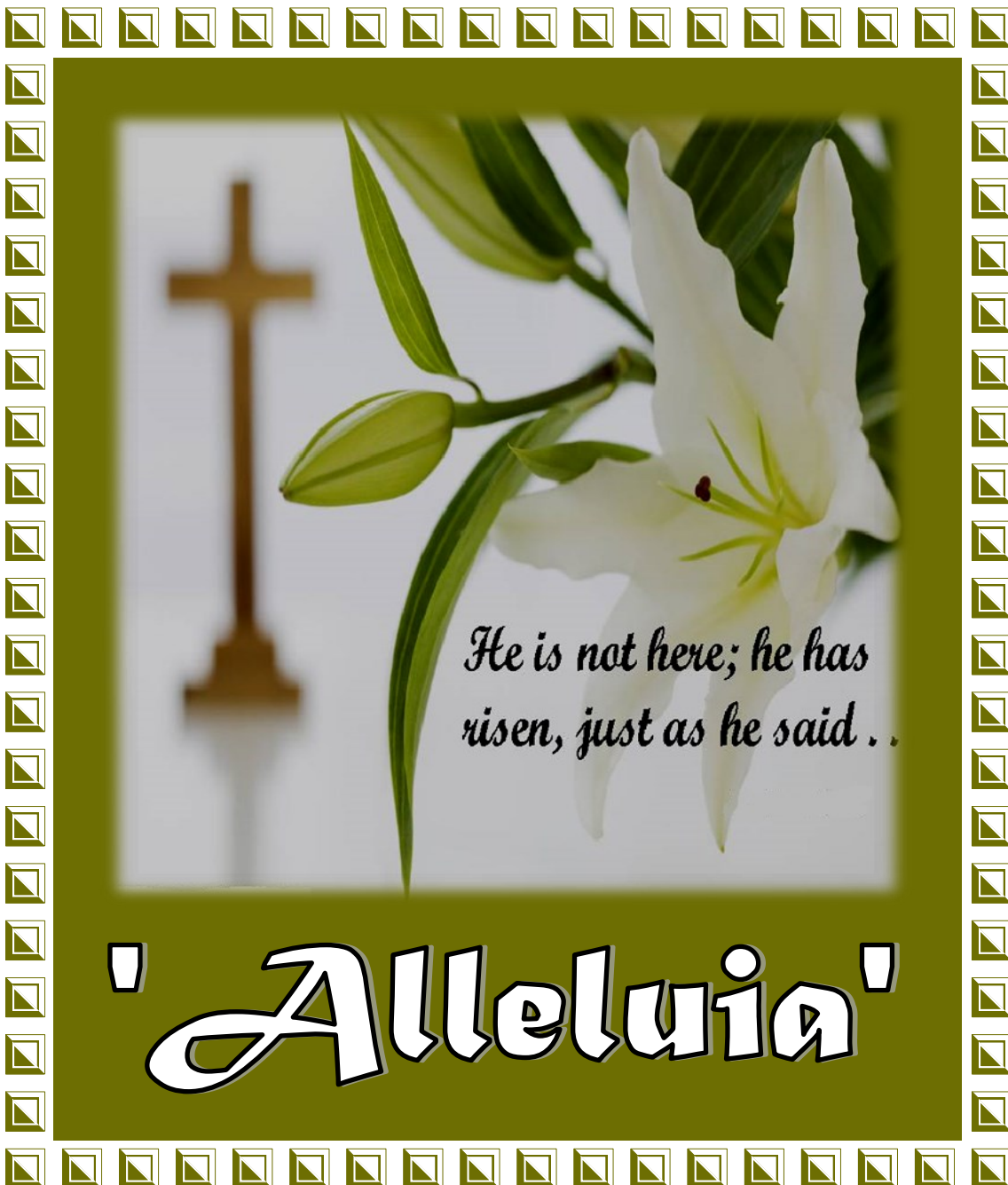
Pray the Rosary
Wed & Fri before 5.30pm Mass
Saturday after 9am Mass
and First Saturday each month
3.30pm

Reconciliation
Saturday 12pm—12.30pm
and 4pm—4.30pm

ACU Chapel Signadou
Wednesday at Midday

If you are in Urgent need of
a Priest Call - 6248 8253

EASTER



A warm welcome is extended to guests & parishioners celebrating our Eucharist today.

THURSDAY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus Christ!
I give you a new commandment:
love one another as I have loved you.
Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

READINGS

Exodus 12:1-8. 11-14 1 Corinthians 11:23-26
Gospel: John 13:1-15

PSALM

Refrain: The cup we bless
 is a sharing in Christ's blood.
 The bread we break
 is a sharing in his body.

How can I repay the Lord
for his goodness to me?
The cup of blessing I will raise
I will call on the Lord's name.

O precious in the eyes of the Lord
is the death of his faithful.
Your servant Lord your servant am I,
you have loosened my bonds.

A thanksgiving sacrifice I make,
I will call on the Lord's name.
I will walk in the presence of the Lord,
in the land of the living.

My vows to the Lord I will fulfil
before all his people,
in the courts of the house of the Lord,
in your midst, O Jerusalem.

EASTER

Easter is the most important time of the year - it is when we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. The people who were the followers of Jesus had been hiding away because they had been very frightened and afraid of what had happened to Jesus. He had told them that he would rise again but they did not understand what he meant by this. On this Easter day Jesus rose from the dead and all their fears were overcome with great happiness and celebration. We celebrate today that Jesus is alive and with us now. We share in this resurrection by making Jesus known to others and we do this by the way we live our lives and by what we do for others. It is a very special day for us and we use symbols to help us celebrate this new life - we have eggs, chicks, bunnies etc. these are signs of newness and new life.



SHARING THE TRADITION

There is an essential unity in the three days of the Triduum which begins with the celebration of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, including the washing of the feet, and culminates in the Easter Vigil, featuring the Service of Light, late on Holy Saturday night.

'This is a time for the community to grow together in deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery and in making it a part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the Eucharist and doing the works of charity.'

CALLED TO FOLLOW HIM IN SERVICE

*Holy Thursday. Fr Isidore Clarke OP
helps us to see how Christ's washing of His disciples feet
is a key to understanding His passion and resurrection.*

Actions speak louder than words! That was certainly true when Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. This strange incident is sandwiched between two references concerning Judas' outrageous betrayal of his master, Jesus. This literary device provides a key to our understanding Christ's impending Passion, and what it means for us to be His true followers. In this way the evangelist not only emphasizes the stark contrast between the treachery of Judas and Christ's loyal, devoted service, but also that of false and true discipleship!

Today's Gospel begins with a meal, which is resonant of the Passover celebration of God delivering His people from slavery in Egypt. According to the Synoptic Gospels it was at that meal that Jesus celebrated the first Mass. There He offered His own Body and Blood as food and drink. In a different way He would make the same sacrificial gift of Himself on the cross. This meal renewed God's saving covenant with His people, and they renewed their commitment to God and to each other. At that meal Jesus expressed the depth of His love for us. John tells us, **'Having loved his own who were in the world, He loved them to the end,'** (Jn. 13.1). That love would take Him to the cross.

But, to explain His crucifixion, Jesus then expressed His love in a strange and shocking way. Rising from the table, He set about washing His disciples' feet, which would have been dusty, hot, sweaty and smelly. Jesus proposed to perform what was considered to be a very menial and unpleasant task, usually carried out by a pagan slave. And yet that was precisely what Jesus insisted on doing. To free us from sin He assumed the role a pagan slave! In this He completely reversed the obvious master-disciple relationship. No wonder Peter protested!

But washing the feet of His disciples was so important that Jesus insisted, **"Unless I wash you, you have no share with me,"** (Jn. 13. 8). Why? It has been suggested that this washing had baptismal overtones, and harked back to Christ's telling Nicodemus that if we are to see the Kingdom of God we must be born from above, of water and the Spirit, (cf. Jn. 3. 3). But more precisely, from having his feet washed, Peter must learn the meaning of Christ's Passion, and how we, His followers, must share in it. By performing the menial task of a slave Jesus showed that He had come to serve His heavenly Father and us. He would empty himself of His divine majesty and glory and become a servant, obedient to the shameful death on the cross. We, like Jesus, have been called to serve God and each other. Such service is not degrading, if it is given with love. The very opposite. Loving service brings out the best in us. Instead of being selfish and self-centred we respond to other people's needs. At times that will demand painful sacrifices. The whole Christian community of the Church is called to follow Christ, the Suffering Servant of the Lord. That was the lesson Jesus wanted to drive home just before His Passion.

This loving service is summed up in the washing of the feet. That service was expressed most profoundly in the sacrifice of the cross, made present on our altars. With Christ, at every Mass, we should commit our whole lives to serving God and each other. We resolve to die to the selfish, self-indulgence of sin and to rise to the demands of a life of generous loving service. That is essential to being true followers of Christ and real members of God's family.

Surprisingly, the washing of the feet provides the key for our understanding the meaning of the crucifixion, and also of our baptism, through which we share in Christ's death and resurrection, and in God's own life. All this would only become clear after Christ's resurrection.

Finally, like Peter, we must allow Jesus to serve us. We need the humility to accept His assistance. We can have no part with Him if we refuse to let Him help us. Quite simply, we can't share in Christ's work or get to heaven by our own efforts.

Fr Isidore Clarke OP <http://english.op.org/torch>



FRIDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!
Christ became obedient for us even to death,
dying on the cross.

Therefore God raised him on high
and gave him a name above all other names.
Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

READINGS

Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12

Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9

Passion: John 18:1 - 19:42

IN CHARGE OF HIS HELPLESSNESS

*Good Friday. Fr Colin Carr OP
lets us see how Christ's passion is a
surrendering to the will of His Father,
in which He is in charge of His helplessness.*

The way John tells the story of the arrest and trial and crucifixion of Jesus, you would think Jesus is in complete command of the situation. He knows what is going to happen; the people who come to arrest him are more frightened of him than he is of them. The guard who slaps him for speaking too boldly to the High Priest is given a neat put-down. When Pilate "tries" Jesus it is more like Pilate being on trial: Jesus stands still and poor Pilate goes in and out of the Praetorium like a cuckoo in a clock at midday. The carrying of the cross feels like his choice rather than an imposition. The new relationship between the beloved disciple and Jesus' mother, whatever the deep significance we read into it, is his initiative. He thirsts, not as a victim but as one who is fulfilling the scripture; his actual death is an accomplishment, and perhaps it is the giving of the Spirit with a capital S. His unbroken body is a fulfilment of scripture, his piercing is a new birth for humanity – blood and water – and his burial, with all that ointment and spice, is a royal one.

And yet he is helpless. Bound, nailed, buried, things are done to him and he is passive ("the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ").

This is a paradox, and it speaks to our human condition, and offers a vision for our struggling attempts to be truly human, which means truly holy.

We are a puzzling mixture of freedom and interdependence and unfreedom. Our physical make-up gives us scope for action and yet limits what that action will be. We want happiness and something we might call fulfilment, and usually we want that for others too; but others are experienced as positive and negative – not just friends and enemies, but friends who obstinately won't follow our agenda. And of course within ourselves we find goodness and badness, freedom and compulsions, generosity and resentment, hope and fear. We are not simply individuals: we belong to groups, to nations, to the human race in a challenging and challenged ecosystem. We are heading towards death whatever our age or state of health.

If we are Christians we try to follow Christ, and the Christ of John's gospel in particular is this amazingly free person in charge of his life, yet totally subject to the will of the Father, seemingly beyond the authority of those around him and yet bound to humanity by that Father's will, so that he may bring them life. For him there is not a contradiction between his will and the constraints of his life. He chose to be bound, nailed, imprisoned in a tomb. He was in charge of his helplessness. Close to the time of his death, in Jerusalem, some Greeks came looking to meet him; he said, in words reminiscent of the Gethsemane scene in the other Gospels, "Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say – 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name."

Aunt Ruth died of cancer while I was in Zimbabwe, and when I got back to England I was given one of her books – a now very battered copy of Teilhard's *Le Milieu Divin*. A marker was in a page which contained an italicised prayer entitled "Communion through Diminishment" in which she reflected how in her younger years she rejoiced to draw nearer to God through activity and the exercise of his powers; but she goes on: "grant, when my hour comes, that I may recognise you under the species of each alien or hostile force that seems bent upon destroying me.....;when the painful moment comes in which I suddenly awaken to the fact that I am ill or growing old;.....when I feel I am losing hold of myself and am absolutely passive within the hands of the great unknown forces that have formed me;.... grant that I may understand that it is you who are painfully parting the fibres of my being in order to penetrate to the very marrow of my substanceIt is not enough that I should die while communicating. Teach me to treat my death as an act of communion." I sensed that Aunt Ruth, in leaving the marker there, had wanted to say she was dying in peace. By surrendering to God's will she was following the Christ who was in charge of his helplessness.

Fr Colin Carr OP <http://english.op.org/torch>

PSALM: 30:2. 6. 12-13. 15-17. 25

Father, I put my life in your hands.

In you, O Lord, I take refuge.
Let me never be put to shame.
In your justice, set me free.
Into your hands I commend my spirit.
It is you who will redeem me, Lord.

In the face of all my foes
I am a reproach,
an object of scorn to my neighbours
and of fear to my friends.

Those who see me in the street
run far away from me.

I am like a dead man,
forgotten in men's hearts,
like a thing thrown away.

But as for me, I trust in you, Lord,
I say: 'You are my God.'
My life is in your hands, deliver me
from the hands of those who hate me.

Let your face shine on your servant.
Save me in your love.
Be strong, let your heart take courage,
all who hope in the Lord.

DID YOU KNOW?

- At the time of Jesus, women were not considered to be reliable witnesses in a court of law.
- The burial practices of the time required that the body be anointed with spices, but Jesus had been buried in haste before Passover so the women are now returning at the first opportunity to complete the process of his burial rites.
- The first witnesses to the resurrection are women. This echoes the faith of Mary at the beginning of Luke's Gospel when she says 'yes' to God's plan for her.
- Singing is an integral part of the liturgy and a joyful expression of those gathered. The Gospels inform us that Jesus and the Apostles sang at the Last Supper.



BLINDED BY THE LIGHT

The resurrection is continually happening for us. The light, the vision, is pouring into us. Our eyes may be dazzled by the light or blinded by seeing it. We try to open our blinded eyes to see him in Himself and in one another. At the same time the Resurrection is not yet, for us. It is still awaiting us. We are still in the darkness, and we walk towards the light in awe and trembling, hoping for courage. It is all too good to be true.

CHRIST IS RISEN! ALLELUIA!

We have been following Christ through Lent, with fasting, prayer and almsgiving. We have tried to keep close to him through Holy Week, his betrayal, scourging and mocking, his sentence of crucifixion, his carrying of the cross and his agonising death. And now we joyfully and gratefully share with him in the victory of the Resurrection. Without the Resurrection, his life and sufferings would have been meaningless. His death reveals the tragedy of human life when it is in conflict with God; but it also reveals God's compassion towards us despite our sin. And Christ's Resurrection shows that the love and forgiveness he displayed in his death leads to glory and new life. In him, death and resurrection cannot be separated.

Fr Fabian Radcliffe OP <http://english.op.org/torch>



During Holy Week, the Gospel readings come to life in a special way as we gather to celebrate the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The readings remind us of our special connection to the land where this great story unfolded. Since the time of St Paul, who urged his missionary Churches not to forget the needs of the church in Jerusalem, Christians worldwide have understood the responsibility to support the land where Jesus walked. In these challenging times in the middle East, Christians are experiencing unique hardships. We have an opportunity to help them through the Good Friday Collection. Christians are in the Holy Land face special challenges many of which we hear about in the daily news. The political, religious and military challenges in the Holy Land are more complex than ever. The wars, unrest and instability have been especially hard on Christians. Supporting the Good Friday collection offers hope to the Holy Land Christians. Who are these Christians? Christians living in the Holy Land today are descendants of those who first believed and lived the Christian faith. It is important that Christians continue to live, work and pray in the Holy Land. What has been accomplished by last year's collection: — Supported 29 parishes, four homes for orphans, three academic institutions - helped keep schools open for 10,000 students - supported 120 men preparing to be priests or brothers - helped rehabilitate 80 homes for Christian families — provided senior care facilities in Bethlehem and Nazareth — created 1,500 jobs in the Holy Land for Christians — preserved 54 shrines connected with the life of Jesus and the prophets. Thank you for supporting the Good Friday collection, you become an instrument of peace in a troubled land.

**Do you
understand
what I
have done**



**Go and do
the same**



PASCHAL TRIDUUM

The evening Mass of the Lord's Supper gets the Paschal Triduum under way. The liturgies of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil are three parts of a single whole. There is no dismissal on Holy Thursday, nor welcome or dismissal on Good Friday, and no set greeting to begin the Vigil. We progress through three acts of a single drama: the celebration of Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection - the paschal mystery. It is only at the end of the Easter Eucharist that we are dismissed, sent out with a joyful "Alleluia, alleluia!"

THURSDAY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The first of our three liturgies take the familiar form of a eucharist, but with distinctive features: the washing of feet, and the transfer of the sacrament for tomorrow's Holy Communion. The transfer offers us an invitation to prepare prayerfully for the next day's service, but it is primarily a pragmatic move to relocate the sacrament. On the other hand, both the washing of feet and the collection for the poor are powerful rituals that reveal the true meaning of the Eucharist: our communion in the Body of Christ.

FRIDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

The liturgy of Good Friday is both solemn and simple. The shape of the service is clear. It has three distinct components: Liturgy of the Word (with readings, homily and prayers), Adoration of the Holy Cross, and Holy Communion. The solemnity of the celebration is reinforced by the silence with which it is surrounded. On no other occasion in the liturgical year does a service begin and end in silence, without greeting or dismissal.

For all its solemnity, the Good Friday liturgy is not sad or mournful. On the contrary, what is being celebrated is the triumph of the cross. The beginning to end. The cross that we venerate is the empty cross, the cross on which Jesus was lifted up to draw all to himself, the cross from which he has been raised to glory. Our reception of the Body of Christ communicates to us his victory over sin and death.

EASTER VIGIL OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

Fire, light, water and oil, bread and wine, a common table - these are the elemental symbols which thrill our hearts on this night of nights, the Easter Vigil.

"This is the night, when Christ broke the prison-bars of death and rose victorious from the underworld."

This is the night of life, of light, of love. This is the night on which light blazes in the darkness, the night on which we wait and watch and listen, the night we bathe in the waters of life, the night we break bread at table with the risen Lord.

EASTER ~ THE RESURRECTION

ENTRANCE

I have risen, and I am with you still, alleluia.
You have laid your hand upon me, alleluia.
Too wonderful for me, this knowledge, alleluia, alleluia.

SEQUENCE

Christians, to the Paschal Victim offer sacrifice and praise.
The sheep are ransomed by the Lamb;
and Christ, the undefiled,
hath sinners to his Father reconciled.
Death with life contended: combat strangely ended!
Life's own Champion, slain, yet lives to reign.
Tell us, Mary: say what thou didst see upon the way.
The tomb the Living did enclose;
I saw Christ's glory as he rose!
The angels there attesting; shroud with grave-clothes resting.
Christ, my hope, has risen: he goes before you into Galilee.
That Christ is truly risen from the dead we know.
Victorious king, thy mercy show!

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Christ has become our paschal sacrifice;
let us feast with joy in the Lord.
Alleluia!

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Christ our Passover has been sacrificed, alleluia;
therefore let us keep the feast with the unleavened bread
of purity and truth, alleluia, alleluia.

READINGS

Acts 10:34. 37-43 Colossians 3:1-4
Gospel: Luke 24:1-12

PSALM: 117:1-2. 16-17. 22-23

This is the day the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad.

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good,
for his love has no end.
Let the sons of Israel say:
'His love has no end.'

The Lord's right hand has triumphed;
his right hand raised me up.
I shall not die, I shall live
and recount his deeds.

The stone which the builders rejected
has become the corner stone.
This is the work of the Lord,
a marvel in our eyes.

This is the day the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad.

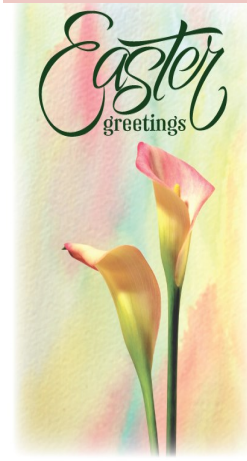
THOUGHTS

The Resurrection gives your life meaning,
direction and the opportunity to start over
no matter what
the circumstances.
Do not abandon
yourselves to
despair.

We are the Easter
People and Alleluia
is our song.



THANK YOU



The Dominican
Fathers would like
to welcome
parishioners &
visitors to our
Easter
Celebrations.
'Christ is Risen'
let us rejoice
together.
Have a blessed
Easter.

EASTER CHALLENGE

A typical Easter worship service is often a bit chaotic. Family members who have been away may be home for the holiday. People who rarely worship may come to church for the sake of tradition. The Easter story itself may seem all too familiar, yet those who try to preach it may wonder how anyone could possibly believe it. This challenge is precisely the opportunity. No priest can make a listener believe that the dead rise. But God can and does work through the Easter message to evoke Easter faith.

THANK YOU

To all who have contributed to the
Easter Liturgies - Art & Environment
(Flower Ladies), Volunteers who set up
the hall and church, Choir Director, Choir,
Organists/Pianist, Acolytes, Readers,
Collectors, Eucharistic Ministers, Offertory
Procession. To those who helped bring a
'shine' to our Church and direct each of
the ceremonies. Finally to all who
contributed so prayerfully to our
celebrations. *Thank You for your help.*



ONCE FOR ALL



At Christmas we celebrated the absolutely
amazing event of God becoming man and
being born as a baby in a stable in first
century Bethlehem!
Now, having been blown away by the loving
gift expressed on Calvary - that Jesus, the
Son of God, out of love for us should submit
to the brutal death of a common criminal -
we come to Easter Day to celebrate the
Resurrection of Jesus - and the new life
which Jesus extends to all of us.
At Easter the world takes on a different
tinge of colour - as along with Jesus we
participate in our own 'resurrection'.

Taken beyond the ordinary dimensions of our lives, we allow our spiritual selves to be lifted up in joy! Each Sunday in the Mass we commemorate the Death and Resurrection of Jesus and open ourselves to the transforming love of Jesus.
If you would like to join us here more frequently - as we pray for peace within ourselves and throughout the world - you will be most welcome.

PRAYERS

In Your Prayers please remember those in our community who are ill: Elizabeth Cronin, Mary Bui, Greg O'Neill, Fr Ellis Clifford, Dion Convine, Mary Martin, Edith Jensen, Philip Bailey, Ryan Fawke, Patricia Zorzi, Maureen Blood, Anne Corver, Barbara Wilson, Awny El-Ghitany, Joe Schimizzi, Elsie Loughton, Alexia Harris, Sharon O'Rourke, Beth Delos Santos, Rosa Maria Santos, Paul Neddrie, Helen Miller, Maria Martiniello, Elizabeth Webster, Mimma Giampietro, Zelma McManus, Catherine Feehan, Jacques Michel, Pamela Sandy, Fr Bernie Maxwell

In loving memory for those who have died

God our Father, Your power brings us to birth, Your providence guides our lives, and by Your command we return to dust. Lord, those who die still live in Your presence, their lives change but do not end. In company with Christ, who died and now lives, may they rejoice in Your kingdom, where all our tears are wiped away. Unite us together again in one family. Amen.

TURNING POINT

Easter Sunday is the turning point, the morning of our discovery:

'The stone was rolled away from the door, not to permit Christ to come out, but to enable the Disciples to go in.' A wonderful quote to pray with, and one which raises beautiful images, of that interior place where Christ dwells, and of our own going 'in' and spending time with Christ here. I leave it with you for your own reflection.

Peter Marshall



STRIPS OF LINEN

Luke mentions "strips of linen lying by themselves" and John tells of "the strips of linen lying there"

-- not scattered about the tomb but lying together. The Church Father John Chrysostom observed, "If anyone had removed the body, he would not have stripped it first, nor would he have taken the trouble to remove and roll up the napkin and put it in a place by itself." As Peter surveys the scene, it becomes pretty clear that the body wasn't stolen. Some believe that Jesus' risen body passed through his burial clothes, so that the myrrh-soaked grave wrappings may have resembled a butterfly's chrysalis after the insect has unfolded its wings and taken flight, the shell remaining but the body gone. We just don't know. In any event, something remarkable has taken place, but Peter can't quite fathom what it is. Not yet. He goes away "wondering to himself what had happened".

"Wondering" is the Greek verb *thaumazo*, "to be extraordinarily impressed or disturbed by something, admire, wonder at." He is amazed, but not yet believing that Jesus is raised from the dead, but the women already do.



CONNECTIONS

Today, we should rise early and go with Mary of Magdala to discover the empty tomb. There, in the darkness, we should feel the astonishing reality that Jesus rose from the dead. When we think of a loved one that we have lost in this life, the idea of them waking and rising can be overwhelming. Yet today, it seems Jesus can be forgotten in the midst of happy chatter over Easter brunches, the good feeling of a new Easter outfit, not to mention that the Easter Bunny seems more popular than Jesus. Today requires a somber visit to the empty tomb and the overwhelming realization that this is not just a story.

Dick Folger - Celebration Publication

COMPARISON



While the women were perplexed about their discovery that the stone had been rolled away, two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The reference to the two men is reminiscent of the transfiguration story which tells of the appearing of Moses and Elijah, except that in that story it is Jesus who is in dazzling clothes. In the story of the resurrection, Jesus is not even present. In Acts 1, Luke will tell the story of Jesus' ascension, at which time there is also the appearing of two men in bright clothes. In both the resurrection and the ascension accounts, the two men pronounce a mild reprimand in the form of a question that starts with "why?". To the women at the tomb they say, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" To the apostles in Acts 1 they say, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven?" In each case the human characters are chided for looking for Jesus in the wrong place. Jesus is not in the tomb, and he is not to be sought by gazing into the sky. He is alive and present in ways that these followers of Jesus will soon discover in the events that are about to transpire. The good news that these angelic beings announce is that Jesus is not in the grave. That was of course obvious to the women. The more significant word of the angels is their admonition that the women remember what Jesus had said while he was in Galilee, namely, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again. The act of remembering is all-important in the biblical tradition. Throughout Scripture, there is repeated admonition to remember words and events from the past. In fact, one of the pitfalls of humankind is that too quickly they forget what God had said or done. God on the other hand does not forget. God remembers and is faithful to His covenant. Psalms 105 and 106 represent a stark contrast between God's act of remembering and Israel's tendency to forget. The empty tomb will mean nothing unless the women and the other disciples remember what Jesus had said while he was in Galilee. The event of the empty tomb can be understood and interpreted only in light of what the message of Jesus had been throughout his life. The death and resurrection of Jesus are not isolated events. They are part of the ongoing activity of God in history. Each new event in this story must be understood in the context of earlier events and words.

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INCLUDING YOUTH

Extend a special Easter greeting to all those who believe sorta, kinda, pretty much. Stress that this is not a judgment or put-down. It often simply goes with the age territory. In John 20:3-8, "the other disciple" ... "saw and believed," yet the next words indicate less than perfect comprehension. Mark 9:24 relates a father's gut-honest prayer: "I do believe; help my unbelief !" The message: If you're here with less than perfect faith and with even lesser understanding of this faith thing, thanks for showing up. Remember that gut-honest prayer.

Jim Auer - Celebration Publication

NEGATIVE SPACE

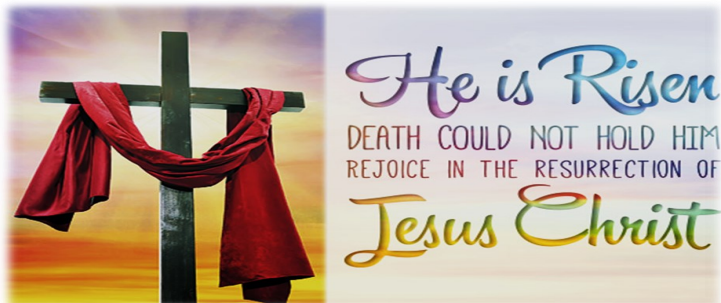
If you spend enough time in an art classroom, you will eventually learn a concept known as 'negative space'. This term refers to the empty space between and around objects in a work of art, like the space between a cup and its handle, or between an object in a painting and the edge of the canvas. Artists are very intentional about how they use negative space, as it is an important way to draw attention to the subject of the work of art. So, paying attention to the way that artists use negative space - or the absence of something - will often reveal key insights into the artist's purpose and can sometimes even reveal hidden or subversive meanings.

Our Easter Sunday readings are not necessarily works of visual art, but they do have a lot to say about negative space, and the absence of things. In the first reading, we hear Paul telling the Gentiles that Jesus was resurrected to be visible not to all the people, but to those who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

The invisibility of Jesus to the non-witnesses becomes a kind of negative space, drawing our attention to the fact that the resurrected Christ was intentionally visible only to a select group of people, suggesting that the witnesses are as much a part of the Easter narrative as the Resurrection itself. And in the Gospel reading, we see Mary, Simon Peter and a third disciple arrive at the tomb and find it empty. It is not clear what the disciples were thinking when they said the empty tomb, but it seems unlikely that they immediately realised that Jesus had been resurrected. After all, it is an odd narrative choice if you're trying to tell a story about the Resurrection. Wouldn't it be more believable, and make more sense for Jesus to still be in or near the tomb, miraculously and visibly alive after suffering such a public death? So why is the tomb empty? Why is Jesus invisible? What point is the Gospel trying to make with all of this negative space?

Let us imagine for a minute that Jesus had been present in the tomb, returned to life, and visible to all who came upon him — that he filled the entire canvas, so to speak. This would probably be the end of the story. Our attention would be focused on the historical person of Jesus, and the evidence of his miraculous resurrection. The actions taken by the apostles after the discovery of the tomb would be of little interest in the face of the overwhelming power of Jesus' glorious and public return to life. Instead, the emptiness of the tomb becomes the story of the disciples — the witnesses — and their journey to faith and salvation as they attempt to make sense of it. And so, we have the road to Emmaus, the story of doubting Thomas, the angels appearing to Mary Magdalene. We come to realize that the story of the Resurrection is the story of the whole church as much as it is the story of Jesus of Nazareth. We are given the theology of the Eucharist, and its power to make us witnesses to the visible Christ, as Paul tells us in the first reading. We are given the story of the Christian community, the communion of saints, the living and eternal body of Christ. Thus, the negative space of the tomb points us not to the absence of Jesus, but rather to the presence of each other, the witnesses, and to the journey of faith that ends in resurrection for all of us.

Megan Black - Celebration Publication



NEW HARMONY

*Easter Sunday. Fr Malcolm McMahon OP
tells us how a question from a nine year old child brought him to
reflect upon how God restores His creation through
His Son Jesus Christ.*

A child of nine years of age asked me a rather difficult question during a recent visit to a primary school. He asked me why the date of Easter changes every year. Not the easiest thing to explain to a child I thought, but I made an attempt at an answer and was surprised by how much the child grasped of what I said. Remembering a piece of advice that my uncle gave me years ago - never talk down to a child - I told him that Easter was on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox. He knew about the equinox, a day made up of twelve hours of light and twelve of darkness, and he also understood that the moon was a good way of marking time by its phases. So to him it was fitting to celebrate Easter on this moveable date because of the new life that was coming into the world during spring time, and how Sunday was the day of the resurrection of Jesus according to the scriptures, or at least the day after the Sabbath. He said that I had given a good answer! Now what intrigued me about him was the way he held together in his thoughts the cycle of nature, the effect of the moon on our planet and how God had used this together with the miracle of the resurrection to help us understand what new life in Christ is all about.

Pope Francis was on to the same thing during the sermon at his Mass of inauguration. He too sees the link between, our life in Christ, nature and the planet we inhabit. He said, 'Please, I would like to ask all those who have positions of responsibility in economic, political and social life, and all men and women of goodwill: let us be "protectors" of creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment. Let us not allow omens of destruction and death to accompany the advance of this world!' Celebrating God's plan inscribed in nature is precisely what we are doing tonight/today. My nine-year-old lad had grasped that. Have we? When we celebrate Easter we celebrate the coming together of light and darkness: "How blessed is this night, when earth and heaven are joined and we are reconciled to God." These are the words of the Church, sung in the Exsultet on this Easter night. Tonight we celebrate the work of the bees whose wax makes the candle that gives us light, and we celebrate the coming together of the discordant notes, the cacophony of the modern world, into the harmony of the Alleluia, the Great Alleluia! This Easter Day we celebrate the possibility of harmony between nature, and mankind and the God who made it all. The God who sent his Son to die and rise for us so that we may be divine.

The difficulty comes for us in so far as we do this every year and not much seems to change. Even if we don't have such a clear idea about the interconnection between the moon and the resurrection as my young friend we do know it is important to protect and care for creation. In Jesus we have been given another chance to find the harmony that was there in the beginning. Jesus's blood has flowed from the cross to sanctify the earth, and yet we still abuse it and misuse it. Christ's body was broken on the cross so that we might not have to suffer death anymore, and yet we continually inflict pain, suffering and death on each other. Even now, as we gather together to celebrate the greatest feast in our calendar, nearly two millennia since the resurrection of Jesus, we know that war continues in Syria and Afghanistan, that children are starving to death, that families are broken up, that refugees flee for their lives, that for many people Easter is not a time of hope. Yet, if only we can protect rather than dominate, be concerned for the poor rather than our own wealth, then some of the those who have no hope will see the light of Christ shine on them. If only we can use the resources of our planet sparingly then those who have nothing will be able to enjoy the God-given riches surrounding us. If only we can remove the darkness from our eyes and see clearly by the light of the moon and the sun, then the light of Christ will shine through the shadows of our time.

At Easter the omens of death and destruction are cast aside. They need not accompany us into the future. We can start again and thus get a clear view of the way ahead, like a nine-year-old child. That fresh start is given to us this Easter, because He has risen, He has truly risen. Let us grasp that truth with both hands.

Fr Malcolm McMahon OP <http://english.op.org/torch>

Each of the four Resurrection narratives goes its own way in details, but there are three elements that they all have in common: - the discovery of the empty tomb takes place on a Sunday morning; - Mary Magdalene is present at the tomb; - the tomb is found to be empty. Beyond that there are differences, and some of the differences are worth noting. In the case of Luke's Gospel one of the most notable features is that it has the most women on the scene. Luke puts it this way: "Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them". Three are named but others are not. Consequently we have to conclude that, for Luke, at least five are present (three plus "other women," plural); perhaps more than five is intended. Two of those named are mentioned: Mary Magdalene and Joanna and belong to the company of those who provided for Jesus' ministry out of their means. We are no doubt supposed to think of that company as the ones who were at the crucifixion, were subsequently at the tomb, prepared spices and ointments, and arrived at the tomb in the early dawn on Sunday.

A second distinctive feature of Luke's Resurrection narrative is the inclusion of a reminder to the women, in which the two men recall the passion predictions of Jesus. As the text stands, we must assume that, according to Luke, the women being addressed were themselves among the followers of Jesus in Galilee who heard Jesus' predictions. That is possible, since they are among the retinue, prior to the first prediction in Galilee. Distinctive to the saying itself is that here, but not previously, the word "crucified" appears. After the reminder is given, the women do indeed remember, meaning by implication that they were believers. That must be so, because the reminder includes not only a prediction of the passion, but also of the resurrection. It is on that basis that they go and tell "the eleven and to all the rest" what they had witnessed.

Finally, Luke includes a brief narrative about the response to what the women reported. The eleven (and others) considered it "an idle tale" and did not believe the report at all. They were not moved to do anything about it. There was one exception, however, and that was Peter. He ran to the tomb, inspected it, and went home "amazed at what had happened". Luke does not say that Peter was a confirmed believer at this point. Later the same day, after the appearance of the risen Christ to Cleopas and another traveller on the road to Emmaus, "the eleven and their companions" are gathered together. It is then that they say, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon". They make the Easter confession as a chorus of believers, based on the testimony of one of their own. Yet that is still not the end of the drama of the struggle between belief and disbelief. Jesus suddenly appears among the disciples. He chides them for their doubts, for "they were disbelieving and still wondering". It is not until Jesus commissions them as his witnesses and blesses them that the disciples actually worship him. The way that Luke reports the Easter story takes us back to the way he tells the story of Jesus all along. The opening scenes of his gospel are about women who have a major role to play in the entire drama of redemption, including Elizabeth, Mary, and Anna. Each is a prophetic figure, speaking of the wondrous works of God. There are additional vignettes that feature women as persons of faith throughout the story, all of which are distinctive to Luke. In addition, frequently in the story that Luke tells, Jesus associates with people considered to be sinners. Both of these threads through the story appear in Luke's post-resurrection accounts. The good news of Easter is announced first to women by angels (called "men in dazzling clothes"), which means they were angels; and if we have any doubt, they are called "angels", just as an angel announced the news to Mary that she would be the mother of Jesus.

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Then, although it appears much later in the post-resurrection accounts, there is the scene of the risen Jesus who declares that "repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem". Jesus' fellowship with sinners lives on.

Some thoughts can be developed out of the story that Luke tells, but one need not be confined to Luke's account. It shares and coheres with other affirmations of the Easter gospel in the New Testament.

(1) Easter is perplexing, and to believe in the resurrection is not easy. The women who come to the tomb are perplexed from the beginning, and the apostles, when they hear the report of the women to them, consider it an "idle tale." It is only later on that the apostles come to faith, and that is after Jesus appears to them as the story unfolds.

To believe in the resurrection of Jesus takes a lot of faith and courage. But it is more than saying yes to the claim made by the women and, eventually, the men in the Easter story. It is at the same time saying "no" to the power of death and destruction that surrounds us. In place of the bad news we hear and the bad experiences we have, we make the claim that there is a sustaining power, God, who brings life out of death and reconciliation out of conflict, as the Bible tells us. There has been marvellous testimony through the ages that that is so, beginning with the earliest witnesses of Easter. To commit ourselves to their claim opens the door to new life for ourselves and for acts of love and reconciliation in the world.

(2) Easter marks a moment in time when God raised the lifeless body of Jesus from death to life, thus vindicating all that Jesus taught and did in his earthly ministry. That was a ministry of inclusion, not only of women (so prominent in the story), but also of Gentiles and persons regarded by the majority as sinners.

The tendency exists for people to divide the world up along racial, ethnic, and gender lines and more. Some of that is inevitable and can be for good purposes. But there is a downside to it too. The divisions that people make between the respectable and the disgraceful, the good and the bad, or saints and sinners can be particularly troublesome. Such judgments are often unfair. The problem that Jesus faced was that some people were written off as sinners, because they did not measure up to standards that those, who thought of themselves as righteous, had set up. They were therefore to be avoided. Jesus sought to break down the false barriers and became a friend of those considered to be sinners. Respect for all, and a welcome for all, is the legacy that Jesus has given to his church.

(3) Easter also marks the beginning of a new creation. It begins with the resurrection of Jesus, and it continues in the passing of time where the gospel is proclaimed and people come to faith. As the apostle Paul put it, "whoever is in Christ is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The church at its best continues to be the community of the new creation in a world that is too often headed for dissolution by violence, abuse, death, and destruction. Being people of the resurrected Lord Jesus, the church is in the business of praying for the renewal of the world and seeking to renew it.

For God *so* loved
the world that he
gave his one and
only Son, that
whoever believes
in him shall not
perish but have
eternal life.

John 3:16

