

## **Easter Sunday**

“We learn the secret of the Resurrection when we learn the secret of the Cross.” So said Cardinal Basil Hulme and, of course, he was right. What we celebrate today does not cancel Good Friday. Instead, Good Friday leads us to a new place and a new relationship with Our Risen Lord – he has conquered death, and defeated death for ever.

The new relationship gifted to us, is to share in his risen life which is always a source of hope, a direction for travel, if you will, to become ‘Easter people’ – and proudly joyful! And the Risen Jesus calls us by our name and recognises us even before we really approach, see, or understand Him.

Only a few days ago I heard Years 3 and 4 of St Mary’s Primary re-enact, and sing with some enthusiasm, at the end of their Passion Play, how ‘faith moves mountains’ and how the stone was rolled away. We had all the hand movements and the energy that only young children can bring to such a performance! But it was uplifting for that very important reminder. Easter is good news, the best news: as individuals, as a Christian community in this watery part of Suffolk, and for a world whose troubles and pain, cry out for change, transformation and new life. The God of all Creation promises a ‘new heaven and a new earth’ if only we can believe what we are singing and practice what we are hearing in the Gospels. That’s our direction of travel.

Gareth Malone is sharing his challenge tonight to perform Bach's St John Passion with a small group of uninitiated people, most of whom can't read music! On the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of this mighty German composer, Gareth described his task to be more like a daunting marathon than a swift run around the park. But we know how much he likes a challenge and what heartens people like me, is that even with the support of an orchestra and professional singers behind them, Gareth believes it is possible for everyone to sing and to be moved by the experience, and changed by it.

Good Friday leads us to Easter. Sorrow turns to joy.

Something else that cheered my heart was popping in to a recent Ukrainian family social in St Mary's House. Their Easter day isn't until May 7<sup>th</sup> this year which even they seemed surprised about. But they were hard at work, and all age groups working silently, concentrating hard – on decorating their special Easter eggs. There was hot beeswax being used and special fine-tipped pens for the colouring of finely-crafted geometric patterns; and the children were fearless around gentle flames it seemed to me. They knew what they were doing, confident in their tradition, and culture, preparing for the Paschal feast; it seemed to be in their 'dna' as much as their propensity to offer you huge amounts of cake and chocolate.

How lovely it is to experience Easter properly without any mention of 'bunny ears' or any sense of embarrassment. Today is the big and serious day in all our Christian calendars

to celebrate, to be joyful, and to let our Alleluias resound! And we are just at the start of a Season which leads us on a new and wonderful adventure as different stories of the Resurrection are revealed and made known, week by week.

We have to learn again how we can grow the Church where we are, how we can break down the barriers of trying something new without being fearful, how we can form new parish leaders and encouragers; to share the load more widely; how we can invite and include more children and young families – without feeling that we have to ‘bribe them’ into coming to worship with gimmick after gimmick, to be on trend. Instead of that ‘quick fix’ approach, we need a more ‘nuanced’ one, entering deeply into the experience and mystery of Easter. We need to unravel its inner meaning, and its genuine constant - of God’s abiding presence with us – alive with us, and for us, day by day. Mary Magdalene was beside herself when the penny dropped, when she saw the Lord she loved, who nurtured her faith in the first place. It is a faith we all share which does indeed move mountains; an Easter faith of lasting truth, grace and mercy. The Bishop of Ely said this:

“Whatever living the resurrection might mean for you and me, it is about every bit of you and me. There is no life now without resurrection as its spring. The transfiguring power of love is at work in us. We may not feel it always in our weakness and distraction, but we have been given treasure.” He is so right; the treasure, ‘the pearl of great price’ is the lasting message of Easter: yesterday, today and for ever;

there is nothing more precious. A happy and blessed Easter to you all!