

Over the past three days the Church has remembered those events that are at the heart of our faith. On Holy Thursday night we celebrated the Mass of the Lord's Supper, on Good Friday we marked the Passion of the Lord, and last night we celebrated the Easter Vigil where we watched and waited for the resurrection of the Lord. These events are the founding story of our faith.

Today, as we listened to the Gospel, we were with Mary Magdalen, the Beloved Disciple and Peter as they faced startling news that would change their lives forever. There is something very busy about that scene in the gospel, as the characters run back and forth from their dwelling place to the tomb where Jesus had been laid. The scene begins with incomprehension as Mary discovers the stone rolled away from the tomb. You can imagine her feelings when she arrived. Her grief at the death of Jesus would have been replaced by fear and confusion, perhaps even anger. All the running back and forth points to a journey that was more profound, a spiritual journey. It was the journey from incomprehension to faith. At the beginning, Mary doesn't understand what has happened. At the end, the Beloved Disciple saw and believed.

The story of that journey from incomprehension to faith is the story of every believer. It is the story of those who were baptised last night. It is the story of each of us. That is why we can join in the proclamation of generations of people who have gone before us when they say, "The Lord has risen. Indeed, he has truly risen".

The thing that stood out for me in the gospel scene is that no one had yet seen or encountered the risen Lord. They only knew he had been raised because they could see the cloth that had been over his face as he lay in the tomb. It is as though there was no physical evidence except a cloth that must have reminded the Beloved Disciple of something. It must have reminded him of God's promises of a new world and a new life. He would have known the promises spoken through the prophets – the promise of death being overcome, and of people living in peace and harmony with God and with each other.

I think the cloth is the clue to how we come to know that Jesus has risen and how we have faith in him. The clue is in the signs. We can recall the words of the risen Jesus to Thomas, blessed are those who have not seen his risen body but have believed. Jesus was talking about us. What

are the signs for us that the Lord has truly risen? The most powerful signs are the sacraments, and the first of these is baptism. St Paul tells us that when we were baptised, we died with Christ and went into the tomb with him so that we might rise to new life with him. So, our baptism is the personal sign for each of us that we belong to the risen Lord. Very shortly we will be sprinkled with the baptismal water as a reminder that we now share in the life of the risen Christ.

The other powerful sign is the Eucharist. Again, we can listen to St Paul who says that our eating of this bread and drinking of this cup is a communion in the body and blood of Christ. That is why our newly baptised last night also made their first communion. We need these sacraments to draw us into the mystery of the resurrection. They remind us that the resurrection of Jesus has changed our lives. We have received the gift of faith.

We now look at life differently; we now look at the world differently. We know that God is at work transforming the world. He calls on each of us to join him in this work of transformation. That was Peter's message to the first believers, which we heard in our first reading: we have eaten and drunk with him after his resurrection from the dead, and he has ordered us to proclaim the good news to the people. In our world today there are too many signs of a world that has not been transformed by the message of Jesus. We can easily become disappointed and ask: Where is God? Or: Did Jesus truly rise from the dead? Or: Did the resurrection make any difference in the world?

The message of Easter is that the resurrection did make a difference. Yet, like those three disciples in the gospel, we can find ourselves not understanding, and wondering what really happened. But that is why we speak of *faith* – we only know by faith, just as they did. If we are to be witnesses to the resurrection, then we are called to live that truth. We can show the world what the Easter life looks like. We can refuse to be swayed by false promises or untruths or hateful words. The new life Jesus brings is different. It is when people like you and me live this new life that the world will come to believe he has truly risen.