

April / May 2019

+ At Easter we want to talk about new life - we want to talk about sunshine and the glories of the returning spring. The symbols of Easter we are most familiar with - even if its only in the form of chocolate and soft toys - all speak to us about life - eggs, chicks, lambs, spring flowers. But we need to go back a step or two first, because our celebration of Easter has very little meaning without what comes before it.

During Lent we sought to follow Christ through with self-denial, prayer and acts of service to others. In Holy Week we try to walk alongside him through his betrayal, scourging and mocking, his sentence of crucifixion, his carrying of the cross and his horrific death. At Easter we joyfully and gratefully share with him in the victory of the Resurrection.

Without the Resurrection, Christ's life and sufferings are meaningless - just another religious teacher whose death is another statistic witnessing to the cruelty, injustice and oppression of the world.

But during Holy Week, we witness the collision of light and darkness, what happens when God's justice and love come up against the darker side of human nature and human society, But Christ's death also reveals God's compassion towards us despite everything. And his Resurrection shows that the love and forgiveness he displayed in his life and in his death leads to glory and *new* life.

We underestimate sometimes those who lived so long ago in a largely pre-scientific age. We probably think they would have a tendency to believe any supernatural thing going. That's not what we see in the Gospels at all. The first reaction of those who are told the news of the resurrection at second-hand is to dismiss it. They don't believe that someone can come back from the dead - particularly when some of them had been eyewitnesses of a death as gruesome and final as this.

And in all the Resurrection appearances of the Risen Christ in the Gospels there is this mixture on the part of those who were there of belief and unbelief, of slow recognition and incredulity, of being sure, but not completely sure.

Our celebration of the Resurrection is missing something vital if we discount the shock and the mystery of it. There should be nothing familiar, safe or comfortable about the Resurrection either for those who witnessed it then, or for us who share in it now. +

Fr Michael