

“Why do you seek the living among the dead? <sup>6</sup> He is not here, but has risen.  
Luke 24 5b-6

One of the high points of the church year, if not THE high point, is the Easter Vigil that takes place on the evening of Holy Saturday, the day before Easter Sunday. The whole service is a symbolic reminder of the move from the darkness of Jesus death, to the light and glory of His resurrection. Beginning in near darkness by the light of the Easter fire outside of the church, the congregation process in, lighting their candles from the light of the Paschal candle, a symbol of Christ's resurrection. We hear the story of God's saving action in history as the service progresses, loudly bang gongs and cymbals as we sing the Gloria and the lights of the church go on, renew our baptism vows and share Christ's peace with each other. The service culminates with the celebration of the first Holy Communion of Easter and it is a joyous celebration in every sense.

One wonders then why nationally it is one of the poorest attended services in the Church year within the Church of England. In our own parish, this service was well attended last year, but for many parishes numbers are often few, and it can hardly feel like a celebration at all. In discussion with my brothers in Christ who are priests in the Orthodox and Coptic traditions, this fact is met with some bemusement, as in their own respective traditions their churches are packed to the rafters for a service which can last in their places of worship for more than three hours!

The fact that our ancestors in Christ in the Early Church celebrated the Easter Vigil in a big way is testimony enough to how important this service was at the very beginning of Christianity, and so one wonders why it is that this service now seems to have rather fallen by the wayside, if it is even put on at all in some churches. For me this is a great shame, and I think our forebears were quite right in marking this event in such a big way.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ, for Christians, is the most important event in human history. It marks a change in relationship with God that had not been experienced before, a change that allows all who seek a relationship with Him to have just that; a personal relationship. In days gone past, prior to this event, some things were just unforgiveable, no matter how many lambs you sacrificed on the altar of the temple in Jerusalem, or how many prayers you said. This event changed everything -everyone, no matter what they had done, could be reconciled to God, be forgiven, and be assured of his grace and love. The only caveat to this, that the person has to actively choose that relationship with Christ, to recognise their failings, and to earnestly desire to live in accordance with God's Instructions.

To know God personally, to be freed from guilt and sin, and indeed to have the opportunity to know God as never before is why the Early Church marked this event so well, and with such symbolism and wonder. Darkness has truly been replaced by light, and it is only right to celebrate it.

The Easter Vigil service is full of symbolism, but it is also much more than just a symbolic remembrance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is an opportunity to stand with our Christian brothers and sisters and to joyfully rededicate our lives to God. It is an opportunity to experience the wonder of the events of the resurrection that took place so long ago, and to join with Christians throughout history in celebrating that we are free from the chains of our wrong decisions, guilt, and sin and that we truly can be born again, start afresh, and know God as a child knows their own parents. If you have not been before to the Easter Vigil then I would urge you to consider it this year. You would be very welcome to join us at 7.30pm on Holy Saturday (20<sup>th</sup> April), when we gather outside of the church and prepare to begin our celebrations.

Many in this world do not accept the reality of the resurrection, and for them Jesus is dead. That the whole of Christianity rests on the truth of the resurrection is why we do need to celebrate it every day of the year, why we need to live as resurrection people, and why we need to openly discuss our faith with all those who enquire about it. The risen Jesus is the joy of our faith, and the

reason for it. At Easter, when for many people they naturally enquire about Jesus and the Christian faith, we have a wonderful opportunity to share the good news of His resurrection with them.

May I wish you all a truly blessed Easter,

Fr Kevin

## **THE PASCHAL TRIDUUM**

***These three days are when we recall the events at the heart of our faith:***

### **MAUNDY THURSDAY**

**7.30pm Sung Mass at  
St Katharine's, with foot washing.**

**This is followed by the procession of the Blessed Sacrament to the altar of repose and the stripping of the altars.**

**A watch is kept at the altar of repose until 1.00am.**

### **GOOD FRIDAY**

**9.30am Stations of the Cross at St Katharine's, then on to Our Lady Queen of Peace to join them in walking to Fisherman's Walk for an ecumenical act of worship at 11.00am.**

**10.00am to 12.30pm Children's Good Friday Workshop at St Nicholas'**

**2.00pm Liturgy of the Lord's Passion at St Katharine's**

**6.30pm Tenebrae service at St Katharine's.**

**7.30pm Taizé service at Our Lady Queen of Peace.**

### **THE EASTER VIGIL**

**7.30pm at St Katharine's on Holy Saturday**

### **EASTER DAY**

**6.30am Dawn Service at St Nicholas', followed by refreshments**

**9.00am Sung Holy Communion at St Nicholas'**

**10.30am Sung Mass at St Katharine's**