

HOMILY – EASTER – 1 APRIL 2018

This sermon is probably the most important in the Church's year, after all it is the Easter Vigil, the Mass of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The 'touchstone' of the human and the sacred, coming together in a glorious historical moment of Divine revelation – THIS IS VERY SPECIAL!!!

The sermon is possibly an appropriate moment to reflect on how everything is seen through the eyes of a Catholic Priest, who is called by the Father, to celebrate the Resurrection of His Only Son, Jesus Christ, in his parish with the People of God.

In the morning prayer for today, Holy Saturday, not, by the way, Easter Sunday, that's next Saturday, anyway, there is a beautiful psalm, one of my favourites, Ps15, where it states, "And so my heart rejoices, my soul is glad, even my body shall rest in safety". Essentially, God gives great reassurance about the care of my soul and future of my body. The Christ event at Easter, is that revelation to the world, that God does care for our souls and secondly that our Transfigured bodies or glorified bodies are reunited, in Heaven, through the Resurrection of Jesus. John 15, "I am the Resurrection and the Life".

Back to Psalm 15, the Psalmist states, with bold prophetic confidence, remember it is written hundreds of years, possibly before the Resurrection, "For you will not leave my soul among the dead nor let your Beloved know decay". Yes, it is psychosomatically desiring of human beings, to live into an afterlife, the ancient Egyptians, The Vikings, The Romans and other civilisations prepared the dead for the journey to the 'after life' but up until the Christ event, there was no definitive proof that this was the will and desire of one, true, monotheistic God.

God knows our skeptical minds, our fears and doubts about death. The superstition, the derisory contempt for even the proof for the existence of God. So, in the course of time, the only true way to prove there is a God and that Heaven and Hell exists, was for God to become flesh, for the Christ event, for the fulfilment of prophecy, the ratification of Jesus's miracles, the calling of witnesses, including the Twelve Apostles and the emergence of the Church, through the Holy Spirit, as the "Bride of Christ". That God desires to unite the world in love through His Only Son.

So, Calvary, the Cross, the tomb and the empty tomb, the appearance of Jesus thereafter, all hand to tale place as an event in time, to teach the world that now an eternal covenant of faith and love exists between God and humanity.

The key question for all of us is how we react to that eternal covenant, to life after death, to the dominion of God over evil. I don't need to tell you that evil is also real and that the Church, in all its bewildering array, is the Sacramental instrument of God's divine plan. A Church battered by bigotry, apathy, scandal and all human failings. God is fragments. The big mistake that many people make, is they only focus on religion and not on faith in God. Because religion is run by humanity, it is always vulnerable to the change of hypocrisy, insincerity and imperfection. Religion is merely the tools but not the core of life. That belongs to faith. I am a priest, above all else for Christ's sake!!

As I look around the world today, in all its diversity, tension, hopes, joys and stresses, I am more and more convinced that many people, certainly in Scotland, have seriously missed the point about faith in God. Yes, we are inspired by those who have freely chosen to be Catholic, it is wonderful to see. But, for many others, including baptized Catholics, God and faith, I am not talking simply about religion, treat

the Spiritual Life as an afterthought, a fringe issue, even something to be avoided or afraid of. Everyone, even Judas, has a soul!

If the faith life is not strong and the prayer life consistent, then God is, to coin the Scot's phrase, 'Oot the windae'. The church is reduced to a 'nice venue' for weddings, baptisms are a social event and the priest is only called when the sick relative has died. First Communion is a fashion show and the photographs, rather than Jesus, takes the centre role. Sacraments are dispensed without faith. Life throwing pearls before swine.

Yes, there are seeds of hope and many of you are part of that hope. You, the People of God, show incredible devotion, fidelity and perseverance, when the Hierarchical Church doesn't always treat you with respect and Christ centred love and truth.

We, clergy can be difficult, inconsistent and even slightly eccentric. But through it all, our Catholic Faith is central to our lives. Not only to our lives but to the future stability of the world. The emergence of Human Rights are a manifestation of a secular society, where God has been rejected or ignored. Because a secular society no longer has moral absolutes, Christian ethics and family values to build on, it all becomes fundamentally individualistic and destructive of community, of *communo*, of the collective. Because Christian faith is absent, they bring in secular laws.

Whereas, a Christian life centred on the Gospel and the Eucharist is fundamentally rooted in truth, Love and the common good. Jesus never uses the term "Human Rights", instead he declares "Do unto others as I have done to you". The world thinks it can manage without God, without faith, without prayer, without the Resurrection. Let us read again Psalm 15, to finish with a flourish of glorious faith.

"You will show me the path of life, the fullness of joy in your presence, at your right hand, happiness forever".

If you want to be happy, believe in the Resurrection.

Alleluia!! Alleluia!!! A glorious Spirit filled Easter to you all!!.