

## HOMILY – EASTER VIRGIL & EASTER SUNDAY – 15 & 16 APRIL 2017

My brothers and sisters in Christ, we are here tonight because we believe in God, we believe in the Resurrection. Without the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, there is no Church, there is no Easter. There are no Sacraments, the present world would only be a dream.

Without the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, there is no finality of life on earth. To renounce our faith in God, to reject the Resurrection, is taking a terrible risk and haemorrhaging the Gift of Life in its fullness.

Resurrection is something that is received as a gift and which is given with the same freedom as thankfulness. It is not won, it is not deserved, it is not a right, it is not natural. It is the most complete experience of grace, of salvation by grace. As a parish priest, I see many funerals, I witness many who grieve for the dead, some with strong faith, others who are perplexed, uncertain, others who have no faith at all. We must remind ourselves that the death of Jesus did not bring about the resuscitation of a corpse. Resuscitation and Resurrection are very different.

It must be acknowledged that if, in Jesus's Resurrection, we were dealing simply with the miracle of a resuscitated corpse, it would ultimately be of no concern to us. For it would be no more important than the resuscitation of a clinically dead person, through the art of doctors. For the world as such and for our human existence, nothing would have changed. The miracle of a resuscitated corpse would (only) indicate that Jesus's Resurrection was the same as the raising of Lazarus or the daughter of Jairus. These individuals returned to their lives and at some point, they died, definitely.

Contrast this with what happened at the Resurrection of Jesus, was utterly different. Jesus's Resurrection was about breaking out into an entirely new form of life, into a life that is no longer subject to the law of dying and becoming, but lies beyond it, a life that opens up a new dimension of human existence. Please note, In Jesus's Resurrection, a new possibility of human existence is attained, that affects everyone and that opens up a future, a new future for mankind.

To conclude, "Christ's Resurrection is either a universal event or it is nothing." If it is a universal event, it has brought about a new dimension of human existence.

For the disciples of Jesus, there was an emerging realisation of what the Resurrection has done for the world. The signs and miracles and teaching of Jesus, all began to fit together like a jigsaw. The Baptism of Jesus, the Feeding of the Five Thousand, the Beatitudes, the Transfiguration, the Parable of the Vineyard, the Good Shepherd, the Wedding Feast, the sower going out to sow. But above all, Jesus's actions at the Last Supper, The Passover and the Passion. It all started to fit into place, the dawning of realisation that the person of Jesus Christ changes the world forever.

Reality is never the same again, the prophecies of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Micah etc are being fulfilled. No empire, domination or authority can hold out against it. Think about the Roman Centurion at the foot of the Cross, "In truth, this man was the Son of God".

So how does the Resurrection of Jesus rest alongside scientific data? Does the Resurrection contradict science? In the deep-thinking mind of Pope Benedict XVI, he writes, "Can there really only ever be what there has always been? Can there not be something unexpected, something unimaginable, something new. If there really is a God, is he not able to create a new dimension of human existence, a new dimension of reality together?"

To use the analogy of Sacred Scripture, from the tiny mustard seed of God made man, something truly great has happened. Even greater than from the tiny seed and tiny egg coming together to conceive a new child in the womb, to be born into the world.

Just as the relationship of man and woman brings new life, so the relationship of God and mankind bring a new relationship to life, through the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God, in Jesus, is relational. He, Christ Jesus, chooses companions to reveal to the world the resurrectional experience, these include, among the twelve, Simon Peter, Andrew, John, James, Matthew and Bartholomew etc, an Apostolic relationship.

Relationships are, then, in faith, the setting for the possible experience of resurrection, the setting for its proclamation, anticipation and participation.

We, the Catholic Church, are a Resurrectional Community. Being a Catholic Christian means believing in the risen Lord, and following the example of the Apostles, who witnessed the resurrected Jesus. Forgiving sins, Baptisms, celebrating the Eucharist, bringing others into relationships with God and His revelation. Today, this Easter night, we receive with deep appreciation Robert Little, into that living relationship of the Resurrection. Our faith is not something to be kept selfishly amongst us but rather, to be shared, celebrated and extended to the ends of the earth.

Jesus extends his hands to the world as he does to Robert, encouraging, inviting us all to believe in Him, to love Him, to serve Him, in this life and be worthy to join Him into eternity.

As St John tells us 'He came in and stood among them, showing them his hands and his side', 'Doubt no longer but believe', they responded, 'My Lord and My God'.

Let us finish with the words of St Paul in Corinthians '5' v42. The body is sown in humiliation and it will be raised in Glory. They buried in weakness but the resurrection will be with power.

God Bless you Robert and Roslyn. God Bless you All.

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Amen