

Easter Day

..to see and to believe

“why look among the dead for someone who is alive? He is not here; he has Risen.”

“when the women returned from the tomb, they told all of this to the Eleven and to all the others. The women were Mary of Magdala, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James. The other women with them also told the apostles, but this story of theirs seemed pure nonsense, and they did not believe them.”

I arise today

In the name of silence  
womb of the Word  
in the name of stillness  
home of belonging  
in the name of the solitude  
of the soul and the earth.

I arise today

Blessed by all things  
wings of breath  
delight of eyes  
wonder of whisper  
intimacy of touch  
eternity of soul  
urgency of thought  
miracle of health  
embrace of God.

May I live this day

Compassionate of heart  
clear in word  
gracious in awareness  
courageous in thought  
generous in love.

[ Blessings; John O'Donohue ]

In our Holy Week camino we have journeyed with our senses alert engaged expectant  
Maundy Thursday; to taste  
Good Friday; to touch  
Holy Saturday; to smell  
and now at these first precious moments of Easter Day; to see and to believe..

Some years ago our young disciples in St Benedict's RC PS in Village produced a series of Easter gardens, and my role was to choose one from each Class as the winner for which there was a thank you prize..an Easter egg. I needed vital information from each teacher before awarding marks..insider information as to whose Garden was the authentic fruit of the child's work and which was betrayed craftsmanship of eager beaver parents with a little help from their son or daughter..rather like gospel stories of the Resurrection I was keen to establish who really got to the tomb first..overall winners Garden came into Church and was placed on the sanctuary in front of the altar for Easter Season..

one day having been out in Parish I came back into Church to say a prayer to find a wet patch on sanctuary carpet next to Easter Garden..puzzled wondering how it had happened..patch very wet a recent spillage..smelled it and realised it was lager..looked at back of Church to discover a chair had been strategically moved into south transept and next to it was empty lager can.."who are you looking for?..he is not here" ..I knew..

Hamish one of our local men of the road..a canny Scot who would visit us perhaps every month, and with my blessing, take food from our Food Bank hampers en route to Middlesbrough..a lovely man who occasionally frequented HM Prison for some minor felony..

I quickly mopped up lager hoping it wouldn't stain our cream sanctuary carpet..but to no avail..the stain remained..a wellwishing parishioner offered to get carpet cleaner to erase all evidence..however, it seemed to me to be a fine Easter story..the Body of Christ..the Body of the Risen Christ..at its best..a garden created by our youngest, brought into our sacred space, a stain made by one of our oldest, sadly kept distant by rank and file in parish and village..and the reaction to the story from the practising faithful on jury service..guilty..

he felt comfortable coming into our Church, made himself at home with his chair and his can of lager..then he walked up aisle to front with his lager put it down next to Easter Garden and why?..why put it down if not to get down and get closer look to get inside the tomb, and then he knocked over the can..a man of prayer at prayer..and some would disagree..as some doubt the Resurrection even now..first to see empty tomb and be met by gardener was Mary Magdalen..for all her reputation of loose living, she was chosen to be first to see the Risen Christ..

"Mary" and she recognised the voice as her beloved..

She has finally been awarded full recognition in her title "Apostle to the Apostles"

as men timidly hesitated in a locked and bolted upper room like frightened rabbits caught in headlights she went to tomb like Hamish to pray..

..and if you still need more evidence “he was amazed at their lack of faith” on the votive candle stand next to Statue of Our Lady was one votive candle alight..

recently lit..

“but this story of his seemed pure nonsense, and they did not believe him..”

they are in good company, alongside first apostles, who needed to see the evidence..

“saw the linen cloths on the ground, and also the cloth that had been over his head, then the other disciple also went in; he saw and he believed..” at last and almost too late..

Saw the lager can and the stain on the carpet..the chair in a place by itself..

“he is not here, he has Risen..he has gone before you into Galilee..you will see him there”..walking twixt Thirsk and Northallerton..and will you stop to offer him a lift?

..on a shingle beach outside Dover, an empty dinghy and an empty lifejacket..”they are not here, they have Risen..they have gone before you to Solihull to Hull to Salford, in hostel accommodation no work visa just state benefits..you will see them there..

..an emptied rake of railways carriages on Cologne Station which carried 1000 refugees from Ukraine via Crakow..”they are not here, they have Risen..they have been welcomed as Risen Christ into countless homes and families for as long as is necessary..and the only disappointed ones are those families who are patiently expectantly excitedly awaiting next train from Crakow at 11pm tonight..

..no visa controls, no suspicious border guards, no Home Office counter terrorist officers “you will see them there” in Germany..but significantly not here in rural North Yorkshire..where supporters of Brexit carried the vote then, and still hold the line on border controls now..

Fr Richard Rohr was to ask “what is the opposite to love?” and we say assuredly “hate” and he says “the opposite to love is control” ..

“he saw and he believed..”

..from 1993 to 1998 I was Procurator [ Bursar ] here for the Abbey and College..

to gain a meaningful retreat away from the pressures of the role I had the Abbots permission to go to the Benedictine Community at Fort Augustus in Scottish Highlands for a week of prayer rest and walks..Monastery overlooked Loch Ness.

One day on a splendid walk into the Highlands I trekked across heather moorland to get a view down onto Loch Ness..far from road and people..and discovered a truly magnificent view of the Loch with the mountains stretching for 40/50 miles beyond

..to stand there and wonder was to pray..”why me?” and having enjoyed it for some time I turned to leave..there behind me on a vertical cliff of rock was some graffiti..

someone had discovered the place and visited at least twice..first time to discover the view and to wonder at it..then gone home and returned with paintbrush and pot of paint..

on rock in letters as tall as I am it said "Christ is alive"..

..and as each of you prepare to make for home from this spiritual camino, whether you were here in person or on-line, you leave a different person..with a different route home be sure..

Maundy Thursday;

without suitcase full of masks you arrived with..now for first time for a long time meeting your real self.."now genuine spontaneous and me"  
with your passion for life and your faith restored  
telling Our Lord the three key words 20 times daily

Good Friday;

"you were made for these times"

"the more we meet resistance, we more so will meet great souls who will love us and guide us

"after 12yrs I am free; and I do not want to go back into the shame"

Holy Saturday;

"smell the sheep" swaledales and herdwick

to focus in meditation in a quiet spot and with eyes shut on?..cake

of baby Alitheia now in Heaven "truth" "that which cannot be forgotten"

and now Easter morning;

see/ notice / engage with your own Hamish and thereby meet the Risen Christ in person and believe..Christ has died, Christ is Risen this morning, and Christ is alive, as indeed you and I are, in the Risen Christ, for infinity

"believe" word challenge opportunity echoes from John's gospel into the reality of this Easter season, immersed in our everlasting relationship with the Risen Christ

"believe"

Some years ago tv advert unusually totally in black and white..and silent..

Showed frail old man 75/80yrs of age ridiculously dressed in t shirt, running shorts and nike trainers..he stands on a street corner and then begins to jog down street..fear is he will collapse within 110yds..someone notices him and nods supportively, someone else claps him on..he keeps running..gradually streets get busier, more people on pavement more applause, and one realises he is a competitor in a race..on and on, larger crowds and louder applause..and he runs into town square where there are thousands of spectators willing him on..he makes for the finishing line and amazingly you realise he is going to break tape on finishing line and win the race! Next time you see him he is taking the congratulations of the crowd and camera's..he stands on the podium, his winners medal round his neck, drinking a pint of Guinness..

..and advert finishes with a black screen and one word written in white letters ..

“believe”

..and will you?..with the Risen Christ’s grace and your belief the impossible becomes possible..without it He is impotent “he could work no miracles there..he was amazed at their lack of faith”..with it..faith/belief..”nothing is impossible to God”

..and the angel left her, Mary of Nazareth, confident in her “yes” response to become the Mother of God..

..and this afternoon, you leave us geographically to journey home, and on line to return home by a different route..you have changed and you have changed our Community by your real presence among us since Maundy Thursday in person and on line..”semper reformanda” always reforming..and let that difference be seen and be believed in by your family colleagues at work friends neighbours..be ready for one of your closest ones to say to you in a few months time “Catherine you’ve changed..you’ve never been the same since you came back from Ampleforth..”we have seen him, he is alive” a new a renewed confident in you and I to be faithful Companions of Jesus..alongside Mary Magdalen and the other women..whilst his closest followers hid in an upper room, afraid to believe in the extraordinary happenings they were told about with such passion faith and belief..”we have seen him, he is alive!”

and your privilege/blessing now is to go home and “tell of all you have heard and seen”  
..and “they told their story” of Triduum at Ampleforth Holy Week 2022

“..who am I you may wonder? I am someone you know very well”..remember?

“..when a great ship is in harbour and moored, it is safe, there can be no doubt..  
but that is not what great ships are built for..”

“..he is not here” ..in tomb or harbour

he has set sail before you..

..you will see him in your Galilee..

Easter Blessing

May God, who by the Resurrection of his Only Begotten Son  
was pleased to confer on you  
the gift of redemption and of adoption  
give you gladness by his blessing. Amen.

May He, by whose redeeming work  
you have received the gift of everlasting freedom,  
make you heirs to an eternal inheritance. Amen.

And may you, who have already risen with Christ  
in Baptism through faith,

by living in a right manner on this earth,  
be united with him in the homeland of heaven. Amen.

and may the blessing of Almighty God, the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever. Amen.

I would just like to thank you for walking, praying and believing with us over this Triduum, a great blessing for me to be with you.

I wish you a very Happy Easter Season

I would also like to thank Fr Kevin for being with us here as back up, as Br Edmund has been for the last three days of our talks

..and especially to thank you for being with us. God bless.