

## Easter Sunday 2018.

## **New Life.**

We've seen some remarkable signs of new life over the past few weeks, signs in nature as well as among people. Due to the rains we had in North Queensland, Lake Eyre is flooded again, teeming with life and birds you'd normally expect only around the coast, flocking there in their thousands. What was desert not long ago is covered with a lush growth of greenery. Trees devastated in the bushfires in Victoria are showing signs of life by sprouting fresh buds of greenery again. On the human plane of new life is the outpouring of aid to assist the victims of both floods and bushfires, and that at a time when good sense tells us to conserve our resources, because the economic crisis hasn't finished biting yet.

Against that background we celebrate Easter this year, the celebration of new life at a completely different level, but as – or even more – significant than the level of new life we see around us, - even though its focus is an empty tomb.

Today's Gospel tells a story of a woman, Mary of Magdala, coming to a tomb where two days earlier the body of a crucified Jesus had been laid, ostensibly to mourn, and if possible to do right what on Friday afternoon had been done in a hurry. But she didn't get as far as the tomb, for even from a distance she could see that the stone which had covered the entrance was rolled away, and she had only one explanation, someone had taken the body. So without checking first, she ran to where she knew the Apostles were, and told Peter and John what she had seen. They came running, and found it exactly as she had said, - the body gone, the burial cloths lying on the ground, and a separate cloth that had covered the head neatly folded all by itself.

What could it mean? On the one hand we have today's Gospel saying that up to that moment they had failed to understand the teaching of scripture, that he must rise from the dead, while on the other hand they saw and believed. What did they believe? What do we believe?

St. John wants us to think about this, before he tells us any more of the story. What does it mean that the tomb was open, the body gone, and the wrappings still there? Would robbers bother the tomb of a penniless man? Would the Romans gain anything from removing the body? Or the Judean leaders, who wanted the body to stay put? Who would unwrap a body and steal it away? And who would pause to fold up the head cloth and put it down?

For two thousand years Christians have been calling this event the Resurrection, that Christ rose from death, and lives now with a new life, an indestructible and everlasting life, that He shares with his followers, and charges them to spread that message to the whole world.

What is the evidence of that new life? The evidence is in you and me, and in all of us who have accepted the call of Christ. In St. Peter and the other Apostles it showed itself in their readiness and their courage to face a world that was not only sceptical, but in many ways hostile, yet they managed to carry their message from the backblocks of Palestine to the heart of the Roman Empire, even to Caesar's household, before they saw death.

We see it in the 2,000 year-old history of the Church, where neither persecution from without, nor corruption and mismanagement from within, has been able to extinguish it. We see it in our own experience, when in spite of the selfishness that is at work in us, we also discover a nobler self that calls us to give of ourselves, to reach out, to share the burdens of others around us, and to keep building on a better world.

Jesus, during the three years of his public life, spoke about the reign of God being near at hand, a reign that would create a new situation on earth, where the last shall be first, and where the oppressed, the disadvantaged, the lowly shall come out on top.

Why did you vote in the last Election? Why do you protest when banks foreclose on mortgages or refuse to pass on interest rate cuts in our current economic climate? Why do you feel sympathy for refugees when they are treated badly? Why do we deplore bad drivers, drug pushes, child-abusers, school bullies and their ilk?

Why did you come here today, if not that somehow you hoped to gain some strength, some support, some encouragement to be part of a world where hope reigns, where love prevails, and where faith gives meaning to life.

Easter, the Resurrection is here, and with it the new life that Christ came to bring, even at the price of his own life.

Have a happy Easter!!!