

## Pastor's Note ~ Second Sunday of Easter

23 April 2017

This week two people spoke to me about their fear of dying. Both have been very faithful, loyal disciples of Christ and have a great love for the Church. Many of us have this very natural fear of the unknown and unfamiliarity about what awaits us in death and afterwards. What is life after death? What is Resurrection?

The gospels tell us little about how Jesus rose from the dead. Instead they tell us about the reactions of the disciples. After Jesus' death, fear had gripped them. Stories abounding in Jerusalem were conflicting. Out of fear on the one hand some said his body had been stolen from the tomb while on the other hand others claimed they had seen Jesus alive. Doubt accompanied fear. Mary Magdalene, Thomas, Clopas and his companion on route to Emmaus, Peter and his fishing companions all encountered the Risen Jesus at unexpected times and places. "I have seen the Lord," "It is the Lord," they expressed not only with joy and delight but also expressing the profound transformation they were undergoing from their doubts and fears.

The Resurrection of Jesus is symbolised in the empty tomb. When Mary Magdalene went there before dawn, she found the stone rolled away and the tomb empty. The body of Jesus was not there, only the cloths in which he was wrapped. A little later in a very touching moment, Mary encountered Jesus in the garden though she didn't recognise him. "Mary" he said and then told her to go and tell the others that he was risen. Mary is known as the Apostle to the Apostles because Jesus entrusted to her the message of the Resurrection. Thomas at first refused to believe Jesus had risen. Jesus then invited him to see his wounded body and then challenged his unbelief. "Do not doubt but believe." Speaking about us then Jesus said to Thomas, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." Peter, who is such a contradiction in character, illustrates both reluctance and impulsiveness, jumping out of the fishing boat to greet the Risen Jesus and to share in the breakfast cooked by Him on the lakeshore. The disciples on the road to Emmaus recognise Jesus when he breaks bread for them. In most of these encounters with Jesus, the disciples did not recognise the Risen Jesus until he spoke to them or acted in a familiar way. The Resurrection is contrasted by emptiness, the empty tomb with the stone rolled away and by the fullness of Jesus' presence, his words and actions spoken to his friends. It is also contrasted by our unrecognition, doubts and fears and our transformation to belief and joy. Most of all the Resurrection stories tell us that Jesus continues to feed us, to nourish us. The Eucharist is implied. It is the gift of His Body and Blood, given to us in bread and wine, the pledge that Jesus gives us of Resurrection, life with him after death. As we grapple with the fear of dying, the unknown and unfamiliarity about what awaits us in death, we can look to the disciples as they too grappled with Jesus' death and, like them, take the opportunity to let Jesus nourish us, to hear his voice and know him in the Eucharist where he will transform our fears and doubts into joyful belief. We can re-live the Resurrection through the lives of the disciples. Eastertide is a joyful time for us, as Jesus' modern day disciples, to reflect on our own lives.

Easter Blessings ~ Sr Mary Neven rsm