

## A WORD FROM THE RECTORY



Dear Friends

As we enter the merry month of May, Easter already seems a long time ago, although it is little more than two weeks since we celebrated the glorious feast of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Eastertide, like Lent, lasts for forty days and ends on the feast of the Ascension – this time is sometimes referred to as ‘the great forty days!’ These are the six weeks that changed the world!

Of course, without the Resurrection, we would have nothing to celebrate and I know that this, for many, is something of a stumbling block. A former Bishop of Durham, David Jenkins, described the physical resurrection as ‘merely a conjuring trick with bones!’ Theologians have ‘toyed’ with various suggestions as to what happened on Easter morning and most of them quickly get into the realms of heresy!

So what did happen? It’s really quite simple; Jesus Christ was made alive by the power of God at work in him. His presence was physical, visible and real. The Resurrection appearances testify to this from that first meeting with Mary Magdalene to the appearance with ‘Doubting’ Thomas in the Upper Room.

The story I like best of all is the Road to Emmaus where Jesus joins a group of travellers and ends up having a meal with them.... Except he didn’t! He ‘vanished from their sight!’ before he could eat! There can be little doubt that the body of Jesus, whilst physical in every sense, was somehow different. He told Mary, ‘do not hold on to me’; In the Upper Room, the windows and doors were bolted for fear of the Jews and Jesus came and stood in their midst and in the house in Emmaus he ‘vanished from their sight.

The Resurrection body of Jesus had qualities beyond that of mere physical attributes. It was so necessary for those early disciples and followers to see him in the flesh, or else they would never have believed that he had risen. Once the Resurrection had become a reality to those early ‘Christians’ Jesus could finally leave them. (We celebrate this on Ascension Day) and he blazes the trail to heaven where all faithful (and not so faithful!) people will follow. Life eternal is now a reality and

death no longer holds any fear, as a new life will break upon us when this earthly life is over.

'New beginnings' is the promise of the Easter story. A new way of focusing on the world in which we live and a new way of discovering what it is to be made in the image and likeness of God. Jesus had his small group of followers who learned so much from him. They, in turn, spread the message and had their groups of followers who all shared the same Gospel which was the good news of Jesus and his new life. Their groups are known as the 'ecclesia' and our translation is simply, the Church. We are called to be a community of those who want to discover more and more about Christ, ourselves, the world and each other. Somehow, we're all caught up in the life of the Divine even when we don't want to recognise it. The choice is whether or not we want to grow in faith or wallow in ignorance? The new beginnings of which we speak are there for all! As the Psalmist says: 'Taste and see that the Lord is good! Get stuck in on your faith journey; get your sleeves rolled up and your hands dirty as together we too can change the world!

Yours sincerely,

*Fr. Keith*