



Easter Message 2024

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As described in the Gospel, one remarkable aspect of Easter is that no one anticipated it.

The disciples did not fully comprehend Jesus' statement about rising from the dead until some time later, when they either remembered it or came to their own conclusion.

But when it was discovered that He was missing from the tomb on that day, they were only shocked and perplexed.

The first to have seen Him alive were not believed by the others - yet these were people who believed in life after death.

They might well have accepted that a good man like Jesus would have 'died and gone to heaven'.

What they were certainly not prepared for was that He had died but not yet gone to heaven, that He had come back to life here on earth and was once more with them.

When attempting to integrate the mystery of Christ's resurrection into our own everyday lives, there are two terms that can be helpful. The first is "Fidelity", and the second is "Presence".

Jesus died on the cross because He was, above all else, a man of fidelity.

The Gospels emphasise the idea that Jesus was sent by His Father for the salvation of the world. This was how Jesus understood Himself and, certainly, how He spoke of Himself. We might well say that Jesus knew who He was, He knew what His Heavenly Father was asking of Him, and He was committed completely to His mission, no matter what the cost. He was a faithful man.

As disciples of Jesus, we, too, are being called to live faithful lives in imitation of Him: faithful to God, faithful to His Church, faithful to our families and friends, faithful to our brothers and sisters who, together with us, make up the family of humanity.

During His own lifetime, the faithful Jesus was not always surrounded by faithful followers. In the readings for Holy Thursday and Good Friday, we reflect on the cowardice, shame and infidelity of the closest disciples of Jesus, who deserted Jesus when He needed them most.

However, if we read the Gospels carefully, one thing is very clear: Jesus never fails His disciples. He never walks away from them, even when they walk away from Him. And He will never walk



away from us, no matter how often we seek to distance ourselves from Him. Jesus is present, he is close to us, always holding His hand out to us, and never willing to give up on us.

Ultimately, this is what the Resurrection is all about. This man, who seems to be defeated by His enemies and destroyed by death, rises again to a new life, one which means He is no longer tied to the dusty roads of the Holy Land but is now with us, and among us, and within us.

He is here now, symbolised in the flame of the Paschal Candle, in the celebration of the Easter Mass, in the community of faith which we are. He is calling to us, inviting us to come to Him, encouraging us to open the doors of our hearts to Him, and seeking to unite Himself to us in the extraordinary gift of the Eucharist.

It is this risen Lord whom we receive at Easter and whenever we come forward for communion in the Mass.

His broken and now risen body, and His spilt and now life-giving blood, will be our food and drink for the journey.

They are the living sign of His desire to be present to us in a communion of life and love. That is His promise that, united to Him and in Him, we can become the people God has created us to be.

I pray that as you celebrate Easter with your family and loved ones, you will give thanks for the wonderful gifts the Lord has so generously given us, so that our lives and faith may be renewed.

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