

### **Easter 3 Year B 2018**

I and each of you woke up this morning. There was a very special moment of awakening. I and each of you has been awake all day, you're awake now, most of you anyway, and you'll probably be awake for the rest of the day. That moment of awakening was important but the main thing is really about being awake all day – what you do, think and say and so on.

And by the way, no one ever sees me waking up but plenty of you can authentically witness that I am awake or in my case, what passes for being awake.

It's similar really to what we're doing in this sacred season of Easter. There was a moment of resurrection. Jesus rose from the dead but Easter is really all about Jesus being risen. We solemnly marked and celebrated that dramatic moment of resurrection in our Easter vigil but during the seven weeks of Easter we celebrate and reflect upon Jesus being risen, being alive.

And by the way, there was no witness to the resurrection of Jesus, no not one. But there are plenty of witnesses to him being alive. The two disciples we heard about at the beginning of today's gospel, Cleopas and his friend, had heard about the empty tomb and that he'd appeared to some of the disciples but what really changed their lives was when they experienced him themselves and recognised him. Their hearts burned within them, they were filled with zeal and they turned back from Emmaus to share their experience with everybody in Jerusalem. Then of course we hear that Jesus stands among the disciples and they experience him alive.

In fact we hear about lots of people experiencing him being risen – Mary Magdalen, Mary mother of James, Salome, Joanna and others, Peter and the apostles, Cleopas and his friend, about 500 disciples on another occasion and many others besides then Paul and so on. All gave genuine witness to Jesus being risen though actually, none of them could genuinely witness to the extraordinary miraculous event of Jesus rising from the dead.

Nor can I and nor can you, but you know what, I think that's what we try and do sometimes. We tell people that the heart of our religion is Jesus rising from the dead which none of us have seen just as no one has ever seen me waking up. But just as you can authentically witness that I am awake we should all be able to give authentic witness to Jesus being alive. But that does mean that we must become aware of our encounters with Jesus and be able to recognise him. So that is what we should be considering during Easter. And if Jesus is risen then he is risen for us – that is what he said, he is given to us and in him we can find God but maybe we don't always realise it or recognise him.

But actually when Mary Magdalene met Jesus risen and alive she thought it was a gardener until he called her by name. Cleopas and his friend thought they were

walking and talking with a stranger until he broke bread with them. And up at Galilee, Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, James and John and two others who were fishing saw him but failed to recognise him until he provided for them that huge catch of fish – 153.

If they didn't always recognise him then it's not surprising that we don't always recognise him either, but that doesn't mean he's not alive. He does live on and he lives with us – he shares his life with us, he shares our lives with us. We need to be looking out for his real presence and identifying him so that we can give witness to others, to share so great a joy.

So Easter is not a time to put our feet up after the hard work of Lent, it is a time to be reflective of our experiences so that we can reveal that God is walking beside us. We can encounter him in the sacramental life of the church, we can encounter him in Scripture, we can encounter him in each other and in others besides, we can encounter him in prayer and we can encounter him in the narrative of our lives.

After waking up from my sleep I am awake, after rising from the dead Jesus is alive. Alleluia.