

Easter 2024 SFX

We say it every Sunday when we recite our Creeds: *"On the third day he rose again from the dead"* as if it were some dry bones of historical record of that first Easter. But it is so much more than that! At the Vigil Easter the Resurrection is announced in song! *"Exult" "Rejoice" "Sound the trumpet of Salvation."* We even sing of the bees that go to fetch the wax, to build the candle, that burns the flame that announces an end to gloom and darkness. *"Dazzling is the night for me"*, we sing. A flame spreads in our hands through the entire Church. *"Let this holy building shake for joy"* we sing, just as the earth shook that first Easter and the guards of the tomb lay like dead men.

We sing because words are not enough to describe the mysteries we celebrate at Easter. We turn to poetry because plain prose cannot match our inner feeling. *"Rejoice, O earth, in shining splendour, radiant in the brightness of your King! Christ has conquered! Glory fills you! Darkness vanishes for ever!"* No song is more important, no chant is as beautifully crafted as the Exultet, the one we sing on Easter night to proclaim Jesus Risen from the Dead.

And today we stand in the brightness of Christ's new day. We might think that Easter is about what happens to Jesus, He is Risen. But the reason that waters of baptism are such an important part of our celebration is because we remember that in going down into the waters we rise with Christ. St Paul talks about us going into the tomb with Christ so that joined to him we might live with him, live by his grace, his life, with his love.

In the Gospel Mary is shocked to see that the stone has been rolled away and thinks that someone has stolen the body of Jesus. Her first instinct is that grave robbers have been at work. There is a great irony here because a grave robber has indeed been at work. The Father, the Creator of heaven and earth, the God of life, the one who promised Ezekiel in the valley of the dry bones that he would open our graves, raise us from our graves, and put his spirit in us, the Creator God has been at work. He has robbed the tomb, thrown away the gravestone that represents the finality of death, and opened a door we thought permanently closed. In this wonderful grave robbery we see that God hates death.

He lifted his beloved Son from the darkness of death. *"Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"*

Lord Jesus come into our tombs of sin and despair with your risen life, unlock us from our selfishness. Lead us with your strong right hand to lead the New Life. Rise in us! Easter in us! Help us be that new creation. Come to our world that longs for your peace. Come and live in us and walk amongst us with your new life, with the power of your love, that breaks open our tombs.

Perhaps it is hard to see that the Risen Christ is hidden in our own lives, but that is the daily task to allow him to open our hearts to his risen life, each of us to be a well-spring of life for our world.

The poet Gerard Manley Hopkins from a poem about a horrible shipwreck off the coast of England in 1875 which claimed the lives of many, including five Franciscan nuns bound for the United States. He ends praying that God may “easter” in us, that God may be, as it were, a kind of daybreak in our darkened souls.

I love that he uses “easter” as verb, and it might be helpful to reflect on that. It is not just an historical event of two thousand years ago, it is the very poetry and music of our lives. Using “easter” as verb reminds us that Easter is something that happens to us, it is about action, it is about transformation. The Lord shares his risen life with us. As St Paul says: “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Gal. 2:19-20)

Easter becomes a verb, Christ’s presence in us, in our world if only we let him shine through. “Eastering” in us with forgiveness, with joy and delight, with generosity and grace, with his love and life. The Risen Christ is the new centre, the core from which each Christian lives.

So what does it mean for your life to think of Easter as a verb rather than a noun? How will your life be different with Christ “Eastering” in you?