

THE EMMAUS SERIES

Easter Sunday ABC

Acts 10:34, 37-43

Colossians 3:1-4 or 1 Corinthians 5:6-8

John 20:1-9 or Mark 16:1-7

Wonder and Waiting

We come to Easter Sunday's celebration filled with the memory of the liturgies of the greatest week of the Church's year - liturgies which have spoken for themselves, as they invited us to relive in faith the great things God has done for us, coming to a great climax in the Easter Vigil - captured in the words of St Paul read during the Vigil, 'As Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glory, we too' are called 'to live a new life'.

The days after Easter have a remarkable atmosphere. The Church's mood is not one of exuberant triumph, but one of wonder and calm. Faith must come to terms with the new creation brought into existence by the Paschal Mystery. And it is impossible to forget the price that has been paid: the one who 'went about doing good' has died 'hanging on a tree'.

Though they proclaim realities which are incomparable in their greatness and importance, the Church's liturgies do not strive to impress by creating effect. Only faith can fully appreciate the motivation that brought them into existence; they are a reflection of the Church's living response to what God has done for us. A group of people who have come through a great ordeal or an extraordinary experience will often find themselves in a mood of calm, reflection and gratitude. The liturgies of Easter Week have such a mood.

With Peter, in the first reading, we look back upon the gospel story that has led up to the great event in which we have been given to share. Peter recalls the ministry of Jesus 'anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power' and his tragic death; and as a privileged witness he announces the Lord's resurrection, to be 'the judge of the living and the dead', the one witnessed to by 'all the prophets'.

With Paul, in the second reading, we look forward with a hope that has no bounds. The destiny which is ours through the power of the Saviour's resurrection invites us to 'look for the things that are in heaven', because the life we now have 'is hidden with Christ in God'.

In the gospel reading - the story of Peter and the beloved disciple running to the empty tomb - the Church of the Apostles acknowledges that faith does not come easily: only a generous openness to God will find faith in the Risen Lord. This openness is linked especially with a knowledge of God's ways to be found in 'the teaching of scripture'.

The renewal of baptismal promises, which is customary at the Easter Day Mass, invites us to reflect upon the immense implications of our sharing in the Saviour's risen life, for the sake of the whole world.

John Thornhill sm