

Homily for Easter Sunday 12 April 2020, given at Our Lady of Good Counsel, Wickford by Bishop Alan Williams sm

“We have just proclaimed the Easter Gospel so I wish all of you a very happy and a blessed Easter. May the risen Lord be very much part of your lives today and in the future with his rich graces, with his great gifts.

In the gospel we have heard today from St John about the first moments of what happened at the empty tomb. There is confusion, a great deal of running about. Details are precise – we know for example that St John ran faster than Peter. Probably Mary Magdalene was somewhere in the middle. There was a lot of confusion, lots of energy, and a lack of understanding.

Gradually, out of all this, there will come faith – faith in the risen Lord. An understanding and faith that Jesus Christ, the saviour of the world, suffered, died on the cross, was buried but now is alive. His resurrection transforms everything. For those disciples – Mary Magdalene, St John, St Peter – their lives will also be transformed by the Easter faith. How did this happen? Peter, John, Mary Magdalene, like so many disciples, recognised the risen Lord. Most of the times in the gospel those meetings are very personal. Our Lord sees Mary Magdalene who fails to recognise him until he calls her by her name, Mary.

For St Peter, there will be a wonderful and detailed conversation about his lack of empathy and understanding during Jesus’ passion. Just as he denied our Lord three times, he will now affirm his love for the risen Lord three times.

For St John, even in today’s gospel, at the empty tomb there is already the beginning of a great faith in the risen Lord. This over many years will blossom and bear much fruit. Eventually, he will be able to write his gospel to all peoples, telling them about our Lord Jesus Christ, the saviour of the world, the saviour who rose from the dead. All of this great understanding, this increased faith will be accompanied by a sense of mission. Mary Magdalene runs to tell the apostles; the apostles run to tell the disciples and so it will go on. If we encounter the risen Lord, we are given a natural sense of mission.

So my prayer for us all today is that Easter Season in this year 2020 will be a real moment of conversion for us. Yes, it’s a very different Easter to any other we have experienced. I hope, for myself, I will never experience an Easter quite like this. I long for a time when the world comes back to normal. In the meantime, the grace of God abounds; the grace of the risen Lord is never ending. For each of us is called today, this Easter Season 2020, to be a people of conversion who can turn anew to the risen Lord, and in our own lives and our own ways also become missionaries and go out to other people, just as Mary Magdalene, St Peter and St John and so many others have done before. Again, I wish you a very happy and blessed Easter.”

Bishop Alan Williams sm