

## Easter Vigil Homily 2022

### Welcome

There is a delightful Easter poem by George Herbert, which begins with the words: Rise, heart, thy Lord is Risen.

My two favourite passages about the resurrection are from St Paul, but not the usual places such as Romans 6 and 1 Corinthians 15. Both are from 2 Corinthians, where we read:

For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the one who was proclaimed among you by us—by me and Silvanus and Timothy—was not “Yes” and “No,” but it has always been “Yes” in him. For every one of God’s promises are “Yes” in him; therefore also through him the “Amen” is spoken, to the glory we give to God. But it is God who establishes us together with you in Christ and who anointed us, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a down payment. (2Corinthians 1:19-22)

For God, who said “Let light shine out of darkness,” is the one who shone in our hearts to give us the light of the glorious knowledge of God in the face of Christ. (2Corinthians 4:6)

### Topic

The deep meaning of resurrection is that God is absolutely faithful and that the last word is a word of life and love. Perhaps we need to hear this message today more than ever.

### Steps

1. We need to hear this message as we emerge from the pandemic – a hugely unsettling event, which cost many lives and a great deal of suffering. We are blessed that we have each other in the community: our faithfulness to each other a sacrament of God’s faithfulness in Jesus. We need this good news too in the light of the war in eastern Europe. Next week is Holy Week for the Orthodox Church. We will all need the great reminder in 1 Corinthians 15:

For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be eliminated is death. (1Corinthians 15:25-26)

Against implacable appearances, the final word is not evil but goodness, not death but life, not hate but love.

2. We need to hear this message again as we walk the synodal pathways. Of course, the process is not perfect and of course mistakes will be made, but a very solid foundation has been laid down. No one should underestimate the potential of this vast discernment: we are truly trying to listen to the voice of the Spirit. It is tempting to think this is all about church. But that is strictly not true. It must first of all be about the great events that give us new life in Christ, the salvation we celebrate so richly in these days. The Good News is what matters – in all its rich dimensions – spirituality, discipleship, joy, justice care of creation and so on. Only then do we go on to consider what kind of community of faith should we be so as to better service the Gospel. With the “yes” of God ringing in our ears and in our hearts, we should feel free to dream anew.

3. We need to hear this message again on a personal level. All of us have been baptised. As St Paul says:

Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:4)

This simply who we are as believer, as the baptised, as disciples. There is a profound reassurance here:

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. (Romans 6:5)

On account of that highly personal reassurance, we are set free to commit, free to love, free to hope and free to serve.

### **Conclusion**

The poem by George Herbert continues as follows:

Rise heart; thy Lord is risen. Sing his praise  
Without delayes,  
Who takes thee by the hand, that thou likewise  
With him mayst rise

It closes with even greater confidence:

Can there be any day but this,  
Though many sunnes to shine endeavour?  
We count three hundred, but we misse:  
There is but one, and that one ever.