

## Easter Vigil 2013

### Walk in the Light

+ *In Nomine*

Once more we few have gathered around a fire outside a darkened church to dare to dream of a miracle. The fire was especially welcome tonight as the last lashings of winter flick us with icy fingers. We dare to dream, in the darkness and the cold of something new and wonderful, something that will lighten our darkness forever. We enter a dark church in the light of a new Paschal candle, lit from the new fire and hear the words 'the light of Christ'...the light that shines in the darkness, the light which the darkness cannot overcome. We listen to the word of God which reveals God's great love for all His Creation - the Creation which He saw to be good. We hear how God delivered His people from evil and oppression and how God poured out His Spirit and sealed a covenant relationship with them.

Celebrating God's plan inscribed in nature is precisely what we are doing tonight. When we celebrate this great feast we celebrate the coming together of light and darkness:

*How blessed is this night, when earth and heaven are joined and we are reconciled to God.*

These are the words of the Church, sung in the Exsultet on this Easter night.

Then comes the great triumphant acclamation:

**Christ is Risen** - to which we reply **He is risen indeed Alleluia**. And the light banishes the darkness and the bells ring out in joy, for evil is vanquished and Jesus lives and the promise of reconciliation is assured.

The account of Jesus' resurrection in this evening's Gospel is prefigured by a conversation in which the Jewish religious leaders ask Pilate to have a guard placed on the tomb to prevent Jesus' body being removed by his followers. I look at our wonderful Easter sepulchre from where we have just proclaimed the Gospel. I look at our stone soldiers, exquisitely carved and clad in 14<sup>th</sup> century uniform - unequivocally King's Men just like the guards who served the emperor at that tomb in the garden. Though horribly maimed by the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century iconoclasts, our little stone soldiers still convey that sense of shock, awe and disbelief when they realised that the tomb was empty.

For the first part of the Gospel stands in stark contrast to the account of Jesus' resurrection which follows. The 'powers and principalities' of the world represented by Pilate and the priests misguidedly attempt to limit the power of God by human force. But even the well trained soldiers of the mighty Roman Empire cannot compete with the power of Jesus Christ, the power of the living God who has vanquished evil and death forever.

Spending time with my spiritual director this week in preparation for this great feast, we discussed the problem of evil and its many manifestations. Sometimes it can feel like little has changed - there is so much injustice, so much self centredness, so much that is wrong in our society and in our world that we sometimes fail to see the bigger picture. But we need to lift our gaze to our Risen Saviour who has vanquished evil through the power of Love...the Love that hung on the Cross to break the chains of sin and death which bound us. Our Risen Saviour sets us free to join in His transforming work of loving Creation into a new relationship with Him. The evil that we see around us is actually the last lashings of a routed Satan. Though the devil may try to distract us with his 'static', his power is in its death throws and no longer dominates God's good world. Death - which the devil represents - is vanquished forever by the power of Love. By His mighty resurrection Jesus sets us free to choose Life and to walk in the light of His presence.

So tonight in the light of His presence and as we renew our commitment to Him which we made at our Baptism, let us choose life and in the words of Pope Francis,

*let us not allow omens of destruction and death to accompany the advance of this world!*

**Amen.**