

Collect and Readings for Worship at Home

Sunday 31st March - Easter Sunday

Collect:

God of glory,
by the raising of your Son
you have broken the chains of death and hell:
fill your Church with faith and hope;
for a new day has dawned
and the way to life stands open
in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen

Readings:

First Reading: Acts 10:34-43

Gentiles Hear the Good News

Then Peter began to speak to them: 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.'

Gospel: Mark 16:1-8 - The Resurrection of Jesus

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?' When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.' So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Reflection:

Every new beginning comes from some other beginnings end. All the Gospels have been leading up to Easter. Today we have Mark's account of the resurrection. What characterises the first part of our Gospel reading? Surprise perhaps, I don't think so. I believe the women walked through the garden, and approached the tomb with anticipation, fearful yes, but I believe these 3 had faith that they wouldn't find Jesus in the tomb. Jesus, for the past weeks, months and years had been telling, warning, preparing His follows, for the events of the past few days, so I don't think they were surprised. Perhaps surprise represents the modern, worldly attribute when considering the resurrection. The women here in our story, just wanted to be near Jesus, I think. Their faith overcame the fear, the cost and the danger from the authorities. There is a connection that all of us can understand when we visit a loved one's last resting place. In Jesus case we will often read, see or even pray as though we are at the foot of the cross, which is fine but standing outside the empty tomb, with all the implications of that picture is difficult, frightening, surprising but there lies our hope and salvation. Jesus is no longer in the tomb; He has gone to Galilee. There is I think the end of the beginning, but from this ending comes a new beginning, and that beginning starts in Galilee.

Why Galilee? Galilee is out there, out amongst the Gentiles, we immediately see the Gospel message being carried outside of Jerusalem, outside the promised land. The sheep fold Jesus speaks about in John chapter 10 is expanding so that all can be welcomed in to that fold, His fold. Jesus is moving His mission back north of Jerusalem, away from the capital, the Temple, the home of those who see themselves as the elite, those power-hungry individuals. Jesus moves away from there, to the radical people of the north. Mark's Gospel ends..., well possibly it doesn't. Marks Gospel has 2 endings, or perhaps in reality, here in Galilee we have a 3rd option, an end of the beginning, and with this end we have a new beginning. The Gospel message is unending, the Gospel is unfinished it is being added to day by day by those people of faith who continue the work of Jesus and His disciples. Who stand at the foot of the cross knowing their sins are forgiven and who race and look at the empty tomb in hope, and with faith in the resurrection. "I am the resurrection and the life" says the Lord.