

## Homily Easter Sunday 2024

The birth of a child or a grandchild brings great JOY to a family. Recently we welcomed little Edward and little Sebastian to our Christian community. Our own daughter-in-law, Rachel, is about to give birth in the next few days to her second child, a brother or sister for Tomás, and our fifth grandchild. What joy indeed the arrival of new life, God's gift of children into our midst!

In St John's Gospel today Mary Magdalen is at first confused at the empty tomb and runs to tell the disciples the news that Jesus' body has disappeared. 'They have taken the body of my Lord from the tomb we do not know where they have put him!' Her first claim is interestingly, not that 'He is Risen' but that the body has been stolen. The disciples Peter and John run to the tomb, the latter arriving first, and seeing the tomb empty, rather than being confused or thinking someone has removed the body finally understand Jesus' prophecy about rising from the dead. This was for them a cause of great JOY.

In St Mark's Gospel at The Easter Vigil, Mary with the other women meet a 'young man in white robes' at the tomb who tells her: 'Do not be afraid. Jesus of Nazareth you are looking for is RISEN FROM THE DEAD. Go and tell his disciples that he goes before you into Galilee where you will meet him.' Despite the slightly different details in the two accounts, you can imagine the joy of Mary and the other disciples realising that their Lord and Master was alive? Their JOY was indeed great.

It's very interesting that John's Gospel (unlike Acts of the Apostles which puts Pentecost 50 days after The Resurrection, the coming of The Holy Spirit with 'wind and fire') sets The Pentecost story on the very evening of the day of The Resurrection. Jesus comes and stands amongst the disciples. He says, 'Peace be with you.' and then shows them his pierced hands and feet. The disciples are filled with JOY when they see The Lord ALIVE. He commissions them, 'As the Father has sent me so now I am sending you.' He then breathes on them, the breath of God Himself, saying 'Receive The Holy Spirit for those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained.' What JOY for all peoples!

So, the commission to preach The Gospel to all and the forgiveness of sins is the twofold command of Jesus in St John's theology of The Resurrection. For John bringing Good News to the poor, the vulnerable, prisoners, the downtrodden and the marginalised goes hand in glove with the forgiveness of people from their guilt and fear of sin. That forgiveness is only possible because Jesus himself took the sin of the world, and each of our sins upon himself on the Cross. Now risen from the dead Jesus makes our joy complete – Therefore, let's go out into our communities and show that JOY of The RISEN LORD both on our faces and in our actions,