

1st April 2018 (Easter, Year B)

Acts 10:34,37-43; Psalm 117(118):1-2,16-17,22-23; Colossians 3:1-4; Mark 16:1-8.

He is going before you to Galilee; it is there you will see him!

Tonight we come to the end of our journey; today begin our journey!

Over the three days of Easter, as a faith community, we have once again lived through the experience of Jesus who gave up himself for us; tonight we gather to start again. At the beginning of our celebration we have lit a *NEW* fire from which we lit our *NEW* Easter candle, representing our faith in the risen Christ. Then we sat through nine readings leading us through the history of God's love for us, his people, starting with creation, through the main Old Testament prophecies, into the New Testament and Christ's resurrection. In a few moments we will bless the *NEW* water and promise to start again as we re*NEW* our baptismal vows and then recognise Jesus a*NEW* in the breaking of the bread. Tonight is the end of our Easter journey; it is the re*NEW*al of our Christian life.

This year we are invited to reflect on the gospel according to Mark. What we have just read are the concluding verses of Mark's gospel. Mark tells us that the faithful women went to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus. Since Jesus had been buried quickly on Friday night, which was also the beginning of the Sabbath rest, the customary anointing could not be carried out. These women wanted to show Jesus their final signs of fidelity. Although he had told them many times that he would rise on the third day, they did not exactly know what he meant. Did they actually believe or understand those sayings?

In his gospel Mark leaves us wondering. The women arrive at the tomb and find the tomb empty and an angel saying that Jesus is risen! Risen? What does that actually mean? Mark does not share with us the narratives of the disciples' meetings with the risen Lord. We are left wondering. In some way Mark is telling us: I cannot really prove to you that Jesus is risen. Do you want to believe? Do you believe that Jesus is really Son of God who can do what he says he will do?

Faith is a journey. Often we may think we have reached a safe point in our journey of faith, we reach out to grasp what we believe in, only to find that there is nothing to grasp. The angel's message for the disciples is to go to Galilee. What's with Galilee? We are in Jerusalem now! Galilee is the place where the journey began; where the disciples were called to follow Jesus. When we find ourselves in front of an empty tomb and we do not know what to make of it, we are called to revisit the origins of our call, of our faithful response, of our discipleship. This is why part of the Easter celebration is the renewal of our baptismal vows.

Faith is very much like the old game of Snakes and Ladders. At times, as we journey on, we land at the foot of a ladder which leads us up and we feel we have reached the heavens, only to walk a few more steps and land at the mouth of a snake to take us down again. At the top of the mountain the disciples experienced Jesus transfigured, at the Last Supper they shared his Body and Blood, only to desert him and run away from him. Jesus does not give up on them, he knows how weak we are, instead he invites us back to Galilee to start again, until one day we reach 'home,' and are safe!

Let us celebrate this newness, let us meet and start again at Galilee.

Fr Mario