



## St Peter's Catholic Church

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Parish website: [www.stpetersgloucester.org.uk](http://www.stpetersgloucester.org.uk)

Diocesan website: [www.cliftondiocese.com](http://www.cliftondiocese.com)

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**Parish Office:**

Tues, Wed, Fri -9.30am-2.30pm

Thurs-12.00pm-5.00pm

**Parish Safeguarding Representatives:**

Jim Harris & John Bond

### Schools

**St Peter's Catholic Primary School:**

Tel: 01452 524792. Web: [www.st-peters-pri.gloucs.sch.uk](http://www.st-peters-pri.gloucs.sch.uk)

**St Peter's Catholic High School & Sixth Form Centre**

Tel: 01452 520594. Web: [www.st-petershigh.gloucs.sch.uk](http://www.st-petershigh.gloucs.sch.uk)

## 12<sup>th</sup> April 2020 – Easter Sunday (Year A)

### Mass Intentions this Week

During this week Fr Liam will say a daily private mass in St Peter's Church for the following intentions:

Easter Sunday: Irene Eastment *RIP*.

Easter Monday: Ian Cahill.

Easter Tuesday: People of the Parish.

Easter Wednesday: Intentions of Bishop Declan

Easter Thursday: Kitty Smith *RIP*.

Easter Friday: Suzanne Beveridge *RIP*

Easter Saturday: John Wood *RIP*

### Church Closure

St Peter's Church and the Parish Office are closed until further notice.

### RIP

We ask your prayers for those who have died recently:

**John Wood, Kitty Smith, Suzanne Beveridge.**

Private cremation or graveside funeral services will take place in due course. Memorial Mass will be celebrated once the current restrictions have been lifted. We extend our sympathy to family and friends and we keep them in our prayer.

### Easter Blessings

Fr Liam, Fr Donal, Deacons Colm, Tim, David wish all parishioners and their families a very Happy Easter.

### Lourdes 2020:

Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, the 2020 Clifton Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes has been cancelled.

### Donate

Those wanting to make a secure online donation to parish funds can now do so through the parish website.

**We remember those who have asked for our prayers:** Ian Cahill, Andrea Brushneen, Cheryl Loy, Sharon Williams, Michaele Hercules, Mary Wood, Leonard Slatter, Sue Hartnett, Phil Gammond, Mandi Stokes, Theo Montague, Margaret Coleman, Vera Watson, Patricia Walsh, Cecilia Edwards, Veronica Burke, Janet Diaco, Linda Northway, Rebecca Northway, Ben Wilkinson, Jackie Hutt, Steve Prosser, Kitty Daly, Peter Hagan, Frank Kelly, Mary Philomena Mayo, Marie O'Connor, Baby Monroe Cserna-Ochai, Jennifer Morrissey, Kathleen Neely, Joan O'Connell, Milvia Sepede, Eileen Mary Parsons, Pat O'Ryan, Fr Liam Slattery, Christopher Browne.

## **Year of Communion - Sunday April 12<sup>th</sup> – Easter Sunday**

*(This was written before the current restrictions came into place)*

In parishes across the world, at the Easter Vigil, adults from all walks of life will have professed their baptismal promises for the first time, they will have been baptised in waters blessed by the paschal candle, clothed in white as a sign of their new life, and given the light of Christ by which they now wish to live their faith. Very often this is a life-changing moment of great blessing and of great joy. This transforming experience makes everything new and fresh. As we celebrate Easter, spring is beginning to burst forth. The life that comes with resurrection is evident all around as small signs of new growth begin to emerge on trees and in the ground. The world in which we live is beautiful, but it is also full of hidden and not so hidden dangers, which serve to challenge our faith and our beliefs. For the world to come to know the love of God, we have to say no to those things which destroy love. Instead we must spread Christ's message of hope and peace through our words and actions. In the renewing our own baptismal promises, we recommit ourselves to living the promise we have been given and overcome all that takes us away from living fully as disciples of Christ.

### **A homily for Easter Sunday from Deacon Tim Meadows**

Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen indeed!

Though we may have descended into the very depths of hell, if we have descended with Christ, if we have put on Christ and become like Him, then the same Spirit which raised Christ from the dead will raise us up with Him! If hell is like the depths of the ocean, then we who are buoyant with the Holy Spirit cannot remain sunken in the depths!

If God is love and we are filled with God's love, we cannot remain apart from God! We live in the Father's love through the Risen Christ, His Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit; and God lives in us!

The Acts of the Apostles 13.32 says: "We bring you the Good News that what God promised to the fathers, this day He has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus from the dead". Of all the great feasts of the liturgical year, the most ancient, celebrated and joyous of them all is Easter Sunday, the feast of the Resurrection of our Lord, God and Saviour, Jesus Christ; the King and Lord, the feast of feasts, and the triumph of triumphs; but every Sunday, re-presented for us, is the day of the Lord's resurrection.

Every Sunday, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ; the crowning truth of our faith in Him. A faith believed and lived by the first Christian community, handed on as fundamental by tradition, established by the documents of the New Testament, and preached as an essential part of the saving mystery of Christ together with His death on the Cross; His double Passover, from life to death, from death to life.

When in 1 Corinthians 15, St Paul energetically defends the reality of the resurrection of the dead, he starts by appealing to the resurrection of Jesus. It's clear, from the New Testament as a whole that the early members of the Christian Church were, from the first, convinced that the crucified Jesus was not held by death. In Jewish faith and prayer, God is One who makes the dead live; there's a looking forward to a resurrection of the righteous at the end of time. The first Christians asserted that, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, this divine act had already taken place; Christ had died but now was raised from the dead. That which the Jews expected at the end of time had already taken place at a particular time in a particular place, but its effects were beyond all earthly time and space. A spiritual event, beyond this physical world, and yet, physically as well as spiritually, affecting all human history, past, present and into the future.

When Paul tells us that the Risen Christ appeared to Peter and to the other witnesses, including Paul himself, he uses statements such as: "I have seen the Lord" and "the Lord showed Himself." Paul and the numerous other men and women believed that they had received a real experience of the living Lord, a firm conviction of the reality of His real presence. When these first believers proclaimed that they had seen the Lord and that the Lord had shown Himself to them, they weren't referring to some general Christian experience but rather to a particular series of occurrences on the edge of rational humanity; spooky, maybe, but to those witnesses, a real not an imaginary experience. It was difficult for these people to give precise details of something beyond human description or understanding, only through symbol and imagery could they pass on the Good News that Jesus was Risen from the dead, that He was alive, and that they had met with the Risen Christ.

Six Gospel passages serve as sources for our knowledge of the Resurrection (found in all four Gospels), plus St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. There may be differences between the Gospel readings, including where and to whom the Risen Christ appeared, what's not in doubt is the core belief in the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. From the earliest of times, to be a Christian was to believe in the Risen Christ, and to celebrate the Eucharist was to celebrate the day of the Lord's Resurrection; to be really, truly and substantially present at that once only saving event.

The empty tomb figures in the earliest Gospel (thought to be St Mark's), who tells of Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James and Salome, intent on anointing the body of Jesus, coming to the tomb early in the morning of the first day of the week. They're surprised to find the great stone sealing the tomb already rolled back. Entering the tomb they find a young man, dressed in white, sitting there. You'd think they'd be scared out of their wits, but instead the Gospel uses the Greek word for "amazed" or "filled with astonishment". The young man says to them: "Do not be amazed, you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has Risen, He is not here; see the place where they laid Him". The young man fulfils the role of the interpreting angel found in most Jewish apocalyptic literature of the time; it points towards the fact that the tomb was empty and gives the reason for its emptiness.

St John's Gospel has preserved two versions of the women's visit to the tomb, the first being possibly the earliest empty tomb account anywhere. John introduces St Peter's companion to the tomb as the "beloved disciple", so that his coming to faith might interpret the empty tomb.

The encounter with Mary Magdalene has a special significance, as she is told by the Risen Lord to "go to my brethren", she becomes an apostle to the Apostles, and her message was: "I have seen the Lord". Although our earliest written account gives the honour to Cephas, or Peter, in St Paul's letter to the Corinthians, the Gospel tradition proposes that it is a woman who is the first to see the Risen Lord; despite the fact that women were not considered at that time to be the most reliable of witnesses.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ on the third day is an historical fact, established by the empty tomb found in such a way as to convince the witnesses that He had truly risen, and then confirmed by His appearances, first to the women and then to many witnesses, including 500 on one occasion.

A constant feature of the Resurrection accounts, with the exception of Matthew 28, is that the Risen Lord isn't easily recognised at first; it required some word or some familiar gesture of His to make Him known. In other words, Jesus hadn't returned to life as He was before but had passed through death to new life in God. He's Jesus...but He's different!

The fact that many continued to doubt, further reinforces the objective reality of the Risen Christ. At the appearance of Jesus to the eleven Apostles and the two who came hurrying back from Emmaus, in St Luke's Gospel, "they are startled and frightened and supposed they had seen a ghost", in John's Gospel, Jesus walks through the locked doors, but then, having greeted them and breathed on them the Holy Spirit, He invites them to see and touch His wounds, He breaks bread with them and hands it to them, He eats a meal with them...this is a physical reality not a spiritual vision and yet, at the same time, it's also a supernatural event.

It's evident from our Gospels that the resurrection of Jesus is not at all the resuscitation of a corpse, a near death experience, but a rising to new life beyond death.

Christ has truly died; Christ is truly risen from the dead.

The risen Christ lives a life that transcends earthly life; He's broken out of the confines of time and space. The risen Jesus was present to His disciples in a new unfettered manner, the normal laws of physics no longer restricted Him; and not only to His original disciples; He is present, potentially, to all of us living today, to those who lived in the past, and those who will live in the future; all are alive to Christ. Christ yesterday and today, the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega. All time belongs to Him, and all ages. To Him be glory and power through every age and forever, Amen! This abiding presence is implied in Matthew 28.20: "I am with you always, to the close of the age." He is the same Jesus of His earthly life, but now transformed; a glorified Risen Christ.

Paul can declare in 1 Corinthians 15.45: "The last Adam, Christ became a life giving Spirit", living a spirit life now and no longer a life of flesh. Christians came to understand that eternal life is life with God and with the Risen Christ. That conviction is upheld in the promise to the good thief on the cross, Luke 23.43: "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."

St Ambrose said: "Life means living with Christ, where Christ is, there too is life and there is the kingdom". Our (Apostle's) Creed has special meaning for us at this time of year when we say: "I believe in the resurrection of the dead and life everlasting" because we believe that on the third day Christ rose from the dead; but why the third day? Well, because Christ said so, he was fulfilling Scripture.

Firstly, Christ was observing the Sabbath even in his death; the Sabbath foreshadowed Christ's rest in the tomb. Secondly, the number 3 in the bible signified Divine perfection, it represented the reconciliation between two parties and, of course, for us Christians, it represents the three Divine persons of the One, Holy Trinity, Thirdly, in the ancient world, at the time of Jesus, there was a general belief that the spirit of a dead person didn't fully depart the body or the general vicinity of the body until after three days. Hence Jesus waits three days before He visits the bereaved family of His friend Lazarus. The body of Lazarus is fully dead and beginning to decay when Jesus raises him from the dead.

Lastly the many references in Scripture; in the New Testament, apart from the story of Lazarus; in John's Gospel, we have the wedding feast of Cana taking place on the third day, and, later, Jesus talking about the temple which was His body: "break down this temple and in three days I will raise it up", and, of course, in Matthews gospel, Jesus identifies His time in the tomb with Jonah's three days in the belly of the great sea creature. In the Old Testament: Genesis tells us that God created life on earth on the third day, Isaac was under death sentence for three days before God gave him back alive to Abraham; in 2 Kings 20, King Hezekiah says to the prophet Isaiah: "What will be the sign of my healing and that I go up to the temple of the Lord on the third day? In Hosea 6.2 we read: "After 2 days He will revive us, we shall rise again on the third day that we may live before His face". In Exodus 19.10: Moses prepares the people for three days ready for God to come down on Mount Sinai. Finally we have the story of Jonah.

During this Lent we have truly journeyed with Christ in His temptation and in His fast; we have all suffered hardship, difficulties and isolation, we have all had to make sacrifices and have given up many things that we'd have liked to have done; but Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! His body has been broken for us so that we might be reformed in Him; One Bread, One Body, One Spirit in Christ!

Now we, who have suffered and died with Christ, entered the tomb with Him in baptism, so as to rise to new and everlasting life in Him, are all called to be apostles of the Risen Christ (from the Greek "apostolos": one who is sent and enjoys the authority of the instructor who sends them").

May the light of Christ rising in glory, dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds during this time of world chaos and crisis; for Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed!

