

Homily at the Easter Vigil 2018

St. Peter's Cathedral, Lancaster



The Evangelist Mark notes that as Mary Magdalene and the other women came to the tomb the sun was rising. It was indeed daybreak, but it was also a dawn of an altogether different kind as these women would soon discover. A new sun had risen which would never again set, for the tomb was empty and the astounding truth revealed that the Lord was not there – he had risen! Little wonder that the women were thunderstruck. They had come to carry out what they were unable to do on the Friday, anoint the body and give the dead Christ the final dignified Jewish funeral rites.

They discovered that the huge stone blocking the tomb had been rolled away, and the heavenly messenger, the angel, informing them that their Lord was not there. He had risen from the dead! The awful experience they had lived through at Calvary on Good Friday was not after all the last word; God the Father, in the words of the psalm, would not leave his Holy One to see corruption (Ps.16:10). St. Paul would later remark that Christ has indeed risen, and death no longer has any power over him (Rom.6:9). With Christ's resurrection a whole new horizon has opened up before us and before all humanity. Darkness has given way to light, a light that shall never be extinguished. Our Easter Vigil tries to capture this triumph of light over darkness.

The angel also told the women to go and tell Peter and the other disciples that their Lord was not in the tomb, but had risen. With good reason, these women have been called the first Evangelists. We can only imagine how Mary Magdalene and her companions felt as they ran as fast as they could to deliver such a startling and unheard of message. The world has never been the same since that first Easter morning, for an undying and unquenchable hope has been given to us.

'He is going before you to Galilee; it is there that you will see him.' The risen Christ still goes before us, accompanying us as we walk the ways of this world. He is no longer confined to the towns and villages of Palestine, but now free from all human limitation as the glorious and risen Lord he is present to each and to all of us in our daily lives as we open our hearts to him in faith. The gospel resurrection stories are characterised by sheer joy and delight at the realisation that the risen and victorious Lord stands among his disciples. The Lord intends us to share in that joy.

The sun has indeed risen. As it shone on Mary Magdalene and those faithful women at the tomb on that first Easter morning, so the light of that sun, Christ, still shines and warms us with its rays, for it will never set. A blessed Easter to you all. Amen!

+Michael G Campbell OSA

Apostolic Administrator