

An Easter Message from the Rector

Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

I wish you and your loved ones a most blessed, joyful, and *new life-releasing* Easter - and I pray it may bring you fresh light and hope, in these dark days we are experiencing together.

The first Holy Week was a time, at first, of tense foreboding as Passover drew near; then of armed arrest & unjust trial, of cruel torture & painful death; and *only then* of glorious victory and cosmic deliverance.

As I write, more than in any Holy Week I can remember, we are tasting something akin to the lead up to the first Good Friday. I pray that, by God's mercy and grace, we may see our joyful Easter morning too.

Where do you & I look for God's word of comfort and promise, in these days of agony and trial? I myself am finding real encouragement in the First Letter of Peter - who was the fearful witness, of course, to Jesus' agony in Gethsemane, his arrest and trial. Despite wavering in denial, when faced by his own personal moment of crisis and testing, Peter can look back after Easter with a heart *full* of rejoicing :

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" he cries, ***"By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."***

Take a moment to soak in those words. By God's great mercy, your own destiny is eternally secure. No matter what. No matter how you may waver or fail, or suffer now for a time – it doesn't depend on you. For the truth is this : you are safe for ever, simply because Jesus has been raised. *Blessed be God!*

"In this you rejoice" Peter continues ***"though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ"***

You and I are indeed living through a season of trials, of suffering and testing by fire. We are warned to expect more still to come. As a dispersed and separated Abbey family, we seek to care for each other as best we can, to encourage one another with words of faith and prayers of love. We hoist a flag high over the City from our Tower, giving thanks for the NHS and praying fervently for staff and patients alike.

As we pray, and wait longingly for better days, St. Peter urges us to draw deeply upon the Living Hope that Easter has set in our hearts. I close my own Paschal letter sending my fond love to you all, and by joining Peter's own closing call to vigilance and prayer – again, I believe, a clear word for our times :

"Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you. Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brothers and sisters throughout the world."

And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, and strengthen you. To him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen" and Alleluia!