

## Homily. Easter Vigil/Easter Sunday. 20/21 April 2019.

My first reaction was one of shock and horror when I woke on Tuesday morning to read and later to watch Our Lady of Paris burning to ashes, tumbling to the ground in the heart of that great city. Notre Dame du Paris seemed gone and with her so much human history, effort, art, culture and prayer, leaving me with an almost overwhelming sadness. Next, I noticed that my mind had turned to Good Friday and the 'Stabat Mater' the hymn about Our Lady standing silent and prayerful at the foot of the Cross as the heart and core of her Son bled and emptied out His life for us. I recall thinking that if this is how I and so many others felt at the loss of such an iconic building and symbol of faith, how much more devastating it must have been for Mary and the disciples to witness the cruel death of the one in whom they had placed all of their hopes and lives? It was hours later, when news came that something could be saved from the inferno, that I remembered the resurrection we are celebrating here tonight/today.

There was nothing left when the lifeless body of Jesus was taken down from the Cross, placed on the dirty, blood spattered ground and wrapped up in a shroud. Even the tomb was borrowed, its hard cold darkness seemingly spelling the end of all hopes and dreams for freedom and a new, better life. The last witnesses, His Mother, the women and Joseph of Arimathaea sealed it tight and went their separate ways grieving into the night. To them, and to the disciples wherever they had hidden themselves, it must have felt like it was finished, all a devastated, gutted ruin. Jesus had said something like this from the Cross, but His words held a deeper intent and purpose. What He'd said was, 'It is

accomplished' and then commended His spirit and the future to God, almost as if He'd completed a difficult task or was ending an unavoidable and harrowing journey.

At dawn's first light that Sunday morning St. Luke tells us that the women went to the tomb in order to mourn and properly wrap Jesus' corpse, so rushed had been His burial. They found an open tomb, stone rolled away, and no corpse to tend. Confusion and shock hit them leaving them not knowing what to think or do. Terror came next with the appearance of the two men in brilliant clothes who gave them the message of life and resurrection they had to announce. The Angels, for that's what they were, explained that this was exactly as Jesus had said. St. Luke adds 'and then they remembered His words.' In this remembering they began to see the light themselves. They rushed off to tell their friends but were treated as fools uttering nonsense. Peter alone went to look for himself finding the shroud cloths and the tomb empty but nothing else.

We remember them all now because they came to know, imparting this knowledge on to us. We know that Jesus rose from the grave and dust of death because we've seen Him in others and watched Him working through us. His centre did empty out, but it emptied into you and me, defeating our despair, offering us the first light of a new, endless day. The Mother who stood so still on Friday didn't stand in vain. Her prayers were answered, her grief was turned into glory and ours is, too. We know He is risen as He said for we, too, have remembered and seen the Lord.