

Stay at Home!

Acts 10³⁴⁻⁴³; [Psalm 118; 1 Corinthians 15¹⁻¹¹]; [John 20¹⁻¹⁸]

Then the disciples returned to their homes. [John 20¹⁰]

Last year, here in Handsworth, we celebrated Easter in the Church Hall awaiting the resurrection of our Church and fully expected that we would be using the refurbished space this year. We also noted that Notre Dame in Paris had just burned down and that the High Altar gold cross stood out in the wreckage as a symbol of hope for them. This year we have had to do what the disciples did after discovering them empty tomb - they went home, as we had to go home nearly three weeks ago. The chaos caused by the COVID-19 virus is complete together with the pain of loss and so much uncertainty. It is a new experience of Easter for me and for you too.

I remember as a teenager, in my bedroom on the Saturday before Easter Day, listening for the first time to the Vigil Service broadcast from the Russian Orthodox Cathedral in London. I am sure that my little transistor radio didn't do justice to the basses of the choir, but what it did pick up was the sheer exuberance of Metropolitan Anthony as he presided over the Liturgy. Easter had been announced with that universal word in Christendom, Alleluia! The choir then took up the service again only to be thrown into chaos as the Metropolitan was on his feet again and broke through their singing with another exclamation of the Easter Greeting, Alleluia! Christ is Risen! Of course they had to stop and respond, He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

Easter is chaotic precisely because it doesn't do what is expected. Jesus was dead and had been buried and creates chaos because he doesn't stay in the tomb and he doesn't stay dead.

✠ The disciples didn't know how to respond (a sure sign that this wasn't staged). The fact that **they went home** just adds to that sense of disappointment in the Messiah they had followed - not only had he got himself killed, but now he really was gone.

✠ Mary didn't know how to respond - she felt the loss of Jesus' body as deeply as she must have felt his death. The chaos in her emotions becomes clear as the one assumed to be the gardener is revealed to be Jesus, risen from the dead.

✠ **I have seen the Lord!** That wasn't what the disciples expected. Whatever Jesus had said to prepare them for this moment, it hadn't sunk in!

Because of this chaos we have a sure and certain hope that death can be faced, however it comes - through a virus or age or illness - and we face it knowing it has been defeated in Jesus' resurrection from the dead.