

## **Christ is risen, he is risen indeed, Alleluia!**

We have been through the emotional highs and lows of Holy Week and Easter. We arrive today at the Sunday that is sometimes called Low Sunday and in the Gospel we hear again how Jesus came to the disciples following his resurrection.

**Maranatha! Our Lord comes.** This was the greeting of Christians to each other in that first century after the death of Jesus. The words in Aramaic expressed their living experience of the resurrection and their sure and certain hope that a new age was dawning for all humanity

Jesus came to his disciples. This was his second post resurrection appearance; Mary of Magdala had encountered him earlier that day in the garden, near the empty tomb. Now he comes to the others. He finds them together behind locked doors. Naturally their fear was not unreasonable; the temple police were single minded and had the power to arrest them. They had been identified as followers of Jesus, and had seen how he had been treated. They had good reason to be frightened.

But is their fear merely that of the danger that lurked in the streets; a seen or unseen force? Or is there another form of fear; one that was inside them? Were their fears born of guilt and pain and deep regret, a sense that they could, they should, have done more?

And then came Jesus. He stood in the midst of them, "Shalom". "Peace be with you". He didn't just come through the locked doors of the house in which they were living. He came through the locked doors of their hearts. He spoke again, the same words he had used in their last conversation at the supper table. My peace I give you. You will have peace, out in the world there is danger, oppression, but take courage, I have conquered the world. One can almost hear the collective sigh of relief.

He stands among them "Shalom" he says. It was an ordinary greeting of the Jews when they met in the streets. It expressed their national hope and religious belief that one day God's order of peace and wholeness would come to the earth, and all humanity would live together in harmony. Now Jesus stands in the middle of the group and in those simple words, with that homely salutation, there is a wealth of meaning. Victory has been won; a new age has begun.

## **Maranatha! Our Lord comes.**

And he says to them, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." He commissions the disciples not only to carry that peace in their hearts and within their closed community but to break through the barrier of fear and through their lives and future actions to release locked hearts, heal and forgive, and transform the world.

Having spoken these words he breathes on them, he gives himself to them. They will do none of this on their own, but in the power of their risen Lord. They have to let go of the fear that holds them back and receive. As his ambassadors Jesus promises that in loving one another his energy of resurrection will flow through them, setting people free, letting them go.

In our own isolation we can perhaps understand only too well the feelings of those locked in disciples. Day after day we hear the daily total of deaths. We fear the unseen enemy outside our doors. Yet this will end, we will be free once again, the locks will be broken and our isolation ended. Let us pray that, like the disciples in that room, we go out into the world with renewed vigour to spread the message that God loves every one of us and that his love can transform the world.

## **Alleluia, Christ is risen, he is risen indeed. Alleluia!**