

## Easter Vigil/Easter Sunday (2014)

It is a great moment for a priest to gather with his people in a spirit of joy, faith and prayer as we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. We find here a sense of unity in prayer as a parish community; we feel that same sense of unity with Christians around the world who in various ways and cultures and languages, celebrate this same joy of the resurrection. It is perhaps an opportunity to reflect on the gift of faith that each of us has received and which we celebrate here. The gift of faith that first came to us in the waters of Baptism when Jesus called us, made us his disciples, gave us the promise of eternal life, made us members of the community of faith and filled us with the radiant light of the resurrection. Our lives were touched and transformed because Jesus in his love called each of us by name.

As we celebrate the resurrection, the Church takes us back to that baptism. This beautiful candle is a wonderful symbol of faith. This candle proclaims that the light of Jesus has scattered the darkness. There are moments in life when we touch the cross of the Lord, when we experience like Jesus the passion of Good Friday and feel all that he felt – fear, abandonment, pain, betrayal, sorrow and loss. Some of you perhaps have known this recently; others you know are experiencing it now. But the paschal candle invites us to bathe ourselves in the light that conquers darkness, the light that is far greater than sin, the light that conquers the power of death.

Today we go back to our baptism when we feel the touch of this newly blessed, fresh, life-giving water. This water washes us clean, this is the water that God gave his people when they were tired and thirsty in the desert, when they had completely lost their way and doubted every word and promise made by God. We gather today because the touch of this water refreshes us, it quenches our thirst, it is given by God so that we will never be thirsty again.

One of the great images of the resurrection is the stone that is rolled away from the entrance of the tomb. Death can no longer hold Jesus captive and he is set free. The stone that is rolled away becomes a sign of hope and a great call to faith and joy in the resurrection. In rolling away the stone from the tomb, God also rolls away all the stones in our

life that hold us down. He sets us free. He removes all the obstacles that hold us back from enjoying the fullness of life he promises. The disciples of Jesus run to the tomb. Instead of seeing life, their first inclination is to be once again plunged into despair. It is bad enough that Jesus was crucified; now they cannot find him. Everything turns to disaster. And yet, the disciples begin to perceive the signs of the resurrection, signs of new life, signs that that the Risen Lord far from disappearing from sight, is actually present to them in a new and definitive way. And these disciples, so confused, so traumatised, so stunned by recent events in Jerusalem are moved to faith. As we gather here, where do we perceive signs of life? How do we feel God's grace at work within us? What are the stones that God rolls away from your life and mine?

Let us celebrate with joy and renew with great love the gift of faith we have received. We have died with Christ in the waters of Baptism. Today, our loving God raises us up in peace, joy and love.