

April May 2026

Are you breathing a sigh of relief? Winter is now over! The clocks have changed; the days are longer and hopefully the weather will continue to improve. Certainly, nature is coming alive again and hope increases. I for one am feeling better, like the burden of winter darkness has lifted. That's a great metaphor for our Christian lives – especially as we come into holy week. That last week was the definition of a roller coaster of amazing highs and incredible, tortured lows. The elation of the Triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, with the crowds crying “Hosana” and the intimacy Last Supper. How thrilling (not to mention confusing and perplexing!) it must've been to have Jesus kneel and wash your feet. Imagine you being seated round the Passover table and for Jesus to say “Take, eat, this is my body”. I think the intimacy and communion of the Supper would've been added to as the Disciples sang Psalms between the Upper Room in Jerusalem and the Garden of Gethsemane at the foot of the Mount of Olives. The agony of the Garden for Jesus was missed by the Disciples who had fallen asleep. But agony soon found them as Judas – someone they'd shared life with for three years – led the Temple guard and Jewish leaders, kissed Jesus, who was then arrested. The Disciples scattered in confusion and terror, while Jesus was led to trial before the Sanhedrin – the Jewish Parliament. There it went from bad to worse, as it became clear the trial looked not for justice, but vengeance on Jesus. Meanwhile Peter and John stood outside around a bonfire, and Peter was horrified, when 3 times he was identified as a follower of the arrested Jesus. In fear, he denied knowing Jesus. At that point the cock crowed and Jesus was escorted out. Luke records Jesus then looked straight at Peter; how both Jesus and Peter must've been deeply hurt. Peter ashamed and Jesus further betrayed. Jesus was further questioned by Herod and Pilate where the crowd demanded Jesus be crucified – many of whom had cried Hosana! Save us! Jesus was taken to be stripped, flogged and to carry his cross through the crowded streets of Jerusalem – the city he cried over – and out to Golgotha, the place of the skull – where he was crucified with criminals. The agony of his mother, the other faithful women and John at his utter humiliation must've been unbearable. Many sentenced to crucifixion never survived the flogging, but Jesus did, and the mocking added to the physical pain – the crown of thorns and purple robe. In the agony of crucifixion, Jesus's love for others shone through. He cried “Father forgive them!” and provided for his mother in giving John to look after her. How hard was it for Mary and the others to watch the horror and hear the mocking, and how terrible for Jesus to see their pain and confusion. The conversation between Jesus and the thief who recognised his innocence, and something of his Divinity is remarkable, that through the pain and chaos his grace was still attracting people to himself! Not just the thief, but the centurion later. The cross took on a different phase as at last, for 3 hours supernatural darkness descended, as Jesus became sin for us. The weight of that sin – the punishment of us all – eclipsed the seamless relationship Jesus had with his Father and the awareness of his Sonship evaporated under the burden of the entire sin of the cosmos being laid on his soul as he cried out “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?!” The Cup he asked to pass from him was now being drunk fully by him as Jesus “descended into hell” as the Apostles Creed reminds us and there for those three hours God's justice was poured out on the one who had never sinned, as he now bore the curse of the tree and was made sin for us. These things are too hard for us to understand. But his love for you kept him there, not the nails. Who could have blamed him if he said, “I can take it no more” and called for the Angels to rescue him. But who then could call him Saviour? As the Son “became sin”, in obedience to the Father, the Spirit continued to uphold and strengthen the Man of Sorrows. We're just scratching the surface of the depths of this Mystery. The joy is that the love of God sent his Son to become one of us, to live our life, to understand our struggles. Jesus knows what it's like to struggle financially, to have

difficult and broken relationships, to be tempted to give up, to be betrayed and deeply hurt. He not only knows, but he comes alongside us and takes our burdens, calling us into relationship with him. No matter who we are or what we do he loved us so much that he endured death – even death on a cross (Phil 2:8) so he could bring us into his family. He didn't die for nothing – he died for the sin of the world and to redeem the entire universe – to remove the stain of sin from every atom of creation. Was his love wasted? No! We know he won and his sacrifice was effective. He didn't die on the cross crying "Why am I forsaken?!" He was victorious on the Cross and said "Father, into your hands I commend my Spirit." When he had said this he breathed his last." (Lk 23:46) but not before he exclaimed in triumph "IT IS FINISHED!!" – Salvation is accomplished, obedience has been completed, prophecy has been fulfilled, sin has been vanquished. Thankfully, we have further evidence that the Father accepted the sacrifice of the Son, for three days later he was raised from the dead. Not in spirit, but his dead body was raised miraculously, powerfully and symbolising that death, sin and the grave had lost their power and no longer held that sting they had done since the Fall. From the failure in the Garden of Eden to the Triumph in the Garden of Calvary to the Victorious Assurance of the Empty Tomb in the Garden by Golgotha.

This is not just for Easter, it makes a difference every day of life. What difference does it make for you? How does his death and resurrection make a difference for our Church family? Happy Easter! May you know the reality of his death and resurrection right now, whatever you're facing.

With love, your Minister, brother and friend *ROO*