



## Easter Sunday

### HOMILY

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St Mary's Cathedral, Perth  
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When, in the Gospel of Mark, we read the account of the resurrection of Jesus, we hear of the women who came to the tomb early on that Sunday morning to anoint the dead body of Jesus, only to encounter an empty tomb apart from a young man all dressed in white, who said to them,

*“There is no need for alarm. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified: he has risen, he is not here”.*

When they heard those words, we would expect, I think, that these women would, after the horror of his death, have been shocked, perhaps doubtful, but nevertheless excited as the beginnings of an unexpected hope began to stir within them. Instead, as the story goes on we are told that *“they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had come upon them, and they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid”*. It seems that the words of the young man in the white robe – *there is no need to be alarmed* – had no effect on them at all.

The theme captured in the words of the young man are repeated over and over again in the resurrection stories. In Saint Matthew's gospel the very first words of the risen Jesus to his disciples are *“Do not be afraid”*. In Saint Luke's gospel we are told that when the risen Jesus appeared to his disciples they were startled and frightened, so much so that Jesus asked them, *“Why are you so troubled? Why are these questionings rising in your hearts?”* And in Saint John's gospel, although the risen Jesus does not explicitly say not to be afraid, he does keep greeting the disciples with the words *“Peace be with you”*.

The call not to be afraid, and the offer of the Lord's gift of peace, both of which are constantly present not just in the resurrection stories but throughout the whole Gospel tradition, are really a call to faith. We all know how easy it is for us to be driven at times by fear, and to find ourselves unsettled and agitated as we face the various challenges which life presents to us. Sometimes the difficulties seem overwhelming, both in terms of our personal lives and in terms of the problems we see, and about which we are inevitably concerned, in the Church and in the society in which we live. It is not always easy to see a way forward, or even to believe that there is a way forward. And because of this we are tempted perhaps to close in on ourselves, give up on looking



for answers and solutions, and like the disciples after the shock of the brutal death of Jesus, lock ourselves away from the world.

All of this of course is perfectly understandable. And yet it is precisely into these situations of hopelessness, or numbing confusion, that the Risen Lord steps, saying to us, *“Peace be with you. Do not be afraid. I am here. I am with you.”*

This is the faith which we will all soon reaffirm as we renew our baptismal promises. We will do so strengthened by the courage of our brothers and sisters who last night proclaimed that faith for the first time as they were baptized, some here in the Cathedral and others in many of our parishes, and our brothers and sisters who, already baptised, entered last night into full communion with our Catholic community. In this light, our renewal of our own baptismal commitments today becomes a clear and powerful expression of the truth that as Christians we are all brothers and sisters. We belong to each other, we are mutually responsible for each other, and our growth in faith will be a growth we experience together.

Growing in faith means growing in trust. Whenever the Lord says to his disciples, *“Do not be afraid”* he is really saying, *“You can trust me”*. Whenever he offers the gift of his peace, he is really saying *“I will be with you”*. And when, in our renewal of our baptismal promises, to each of the questions we are asked we say, confidently and boldly, *“I do”*, we are really saying, *“Yes Lord, I do believe that you are with me, I do believe that I can entrust myself to you, I do believe that I am safe within your loving embrace, I do believe that you are the one who has the words, and the gift, of life”*.

Our belief, our trusting faith, is all grounded in the rising of Jesus from death to life which we celebrate today. Our baptism was the moment when the Lord drew us into deep communion with him and our journey of faith began. In our baptism, Jesus’s defeat over sin and death became our victory, and his rising to new life became the source of our hope and our peace. In this morning’s Mass, then, and in a special way when we renew our baptismal promises, let us with trusting faith once again commit ourselves to him who really is our Way, and our Truth and our Life.