

## HOLY SATURDAY 2024

I have one clear message that I would really like you to take from this Vigil and more importantly, to live. The King is no longer asleep. And if the King is awake, then understand this, the kingdom is here already.

Those of you who were at Matins this morning heard that lovely homily from an ancient author: *'What is happening? Today there is a silence over the earth, a great silence...because the King sleeps.'* Well, he is asleep no more and the Exultet has awakened us to this astounding truth: *'Be glad, let earth be glad, as glory floods her, ablaze with light from her eternal King.'* I am surely not the only one finds themselves tonight excited, thrilled with the splendour of His risen presence. CHRIST IS ALIVE!

This is the truth that we have been reflecting upon these past days. Christ is alive and that means, as St Paul reassured us in his letter to the Romans, *'...we shall return to life with him.'* Death has no more power over Jesus, nor does it have any power over us *'...we too must consider ourselves to be dead to sin, but alive for God in Christ Jesus.'* Christ is alive.

The King is awake and nothing, but nothing is the same. How can it be? The kingdom is here because Christ is alive and because he is alive, we, the baptised have been empowered. Look at Matthew 10:1f: *'And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.'* The healing that we long for is within our reach. We can be different because he is alive in us, and alive to us. The women who had come looking for the dead body of Jesus to anoint were clearly told: *'he is not here.'* He is not in the tomb, because He is now here, in the lives of all who are baptised into Him, we are now anointed with Him.

My prayer, therefore, as I shared on Holy Thursday evening when our liturgy began, my prayer and the prayer of Jesus is that you leave this place different to when you came. I pray that you have found through participation in the Eucharistic presence on Thursday, by venerating the Cross yesterday, by listening to the Word of God throughout this Triduum, especially this evening's long Lectio Divina, that you have experienced the anointment of all your wounds. I pray that you have

experienced healing in body, in your mind, and in your Spirit, because when the Kingdom comes, the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, sickness is cured and the demons flee.

This is a night like no other. The Exultet proclaimed: *'The sanctifying power of this night, dispels wickedness, washes faults away, restores innocence to the fallen, fosters concord and brings down the mighty...when things of heaven are wed to those of earth and divine to human.'* What a night this is. What a night. There is nothing in Christian life, theology, liturgy or ethics that does not have the resurrection as its source, support and goal. Easter is literally everything, the core of the gospel message: Christ is risen, He is alive. Therefore, we do not need to be walking dead.

Let me invite all of us to take a deep spiritual breath at this moment. We have heard the proclamation of God's outrageous love beautifully expressed in the opening prayer of the Mass this evening. Before we renew our baptismal promises let us pause and pray: *'Lord, stir up in your Church, in each one present here in this Abbey Church or watching online, stir up a spirit of adoption, so that we may be renewed in body and mind so that we may render undivided service.'*

What we are about to do in renewing our baptismal promises is so very important. A real moment of grace. The King is awake, and He is alive to us and wants us to wake up and to take us into His life once more. As I say that I recall just one of the many life-giving conversations that I have had during this Triduum. Yesterday after the liturgy, a woman kindly shared that because of what was said in the homily she decided to go to confession. Thank you for sharing that and thank you for going to Jesus; He was delighted. The decision had nothing to do with the words I had spoken, but everything to do with the presence of Christ and His Spirit that anointed her heart.

What a gift, washed clean, made new in Christ. This is what is going to happen now for all of us. Let us simply remain still and silent and prepare ourselves for the tsunami of grace that is going to burst into this Abbey Church, into every person here, because the King is awake, and he is coming to take us to the Father's heart.

*Abbot Robert Igo, OSB*

*Ampleforth Abbey*

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