

On Wednesday I had the privilege of conducting a funeral at St Andrew's. Moving from the priest's vestry, into the sanctuary, suddenly I paused, at the threshold. Suddenly aware of my movement, out of the ordinary, the profane, into the extraordinary, the sacred.

I felt like Moses before the burning bush. 'Moses! Moses! Remove the shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.'

How good was the Easter Sunday service here at Saint Peter's? More than a hundred people in worship, two baptisms, the church full, celebrating the resurrection of our Lord. The Gospel proclaimed the empty tomb, and the appearances of our risen Lord to his disciples. Taken together, the empty tomb and the appearances of our Lord to his disciples, are evidence of the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus.

Today, we hear that the disciples recognised him in the breaking of the bread. From the very beginning, the Church was aware of the presence of the risen Lord in Eucharistic celebration. As we are aware of him today, as we come with joy to meet him, and feed on him in our souls.

The presence of the Lord himself, under sign of bread and wine, means that the celebration of the Eucharist is the heart of Christian

worship. Indeed, by the presence of the Lord the whole Church is present. For where the Eucharist is, there is the church. And all of this in fulfilment of Jesus' promise on the night before he died, that he would be with his people, under sign of bread and wine, until the very end of the age, 'Take, eat. This is my body...Drink from this, all of you, this is [my] blood.'

The risen, resurrected Christ is here, as Lord and host, and as our God. And he says to us all, and to each of us individually, 'Remove the shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.'

Are you aware of your own movement, out of the ordinary, the profane, into the extraordinary, the sacred, whenever you enter the sanctuary here at Saint Peter's? Do you remove the spiritual shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground?

Christ is risen. He is risen, indeed. Alleluia! And he is with us, with healing in his wings. For the risen Christ, is the crucified Christ. We are like the prophet Isaiah, who saw a vision of the Lord in the temple, sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple.

Angels were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And they called to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.’ And the pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house was filled with smoke.

Leading the prophet to proclaim, ‘Lord, have mercy on me. For I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.’ Then one of the angels flew to him, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The angel touched his mouth with it and said: ‘Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.’ Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I; send me!’

More than half a millennia before Jesus was born, Isaiah prophesied about the coming of the Christ, the Messiah:

Who has believed what we have heard?

And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

He had no form or majesty that we should look at him,

nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

He was despised and rejected by others;

a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity,
and as one from whom others hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him of no account.
Surely he has borne our infirmities
and carried our diseases,
yet we accounted him stricken,
struck down by God, and afflicted.
But he was wounded for our transgressions,
crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment that made us whole,
and by his bruises we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have all turned to our own way,
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.'

In our Old Testament reading we hear them say to Peter

'Brothers and sisters, what should we do?'

Peter said to them,

'Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ
so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the

Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.’

In our epistle today, we are told

‘..Discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring when he is finally revealed. Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. Instead, as he who has called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’ Our Father judges all people, impartially, according to their deeds.

Do you not know that ‘you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited by your ancestors? [And] not with perishable things like silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake.’

‘Oh how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things, and then enter into his glory?’

‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road? While he was opening the scriptures to us?’

The Lord be with you.