

## Easter Day

*Written by the Rt Rev'd Donald Kirk, Bishop of Riverina*

The words from a hymn by the contemporary writer Brian Wren:

Gather the bones and the sinews of memory--  
    healings and parables, laughter and strife,  
joy with the outcasts and love for the enemy--  
    breathe "Resurrection!" and dance them to life.

It may sound odd to talk about Christmas as we celebrate Easter but these two great feasts of the Church calendar are inextricably linked – a fact that is only fully understood in the light of resurrection. We have been reading the gospel narrative of Jesus' life, journey to the cross and his death. Today we read resurrection. In all of this we are hearing the account of these events that was recorded by the Apostles of Jesus. In writing all that they remembered of Jesus' earthly time with them they were doing exactly Brian Wren suggests: "Gather[ing] the bones and the sinews of memory" enabling their experience of Jesus' resurrection to "dance ... to life."

*"After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb."* [Matthew 28.1] This is lived experience shared with those who would listen and later written down for the Church's benefit, so that faith may grow with understanding. These two women witness *"an angel of the Lord"* [Matt 28.2] opening the tomb. Think how courageous they were, they didn't faint as the soldiers did, instead they watched and listened. Fearful as they no doubt would have been, nonetheless they saw the empty tomb, accepted what the angel told them and, as instructed, returned to tell the others about resurrection.

*"Suddenly Jesus met them and said, 'Greetings!' And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him."* [Matthew 28.9] Interestingly, it is only as they have accepted and believed what the angel told them and began the journey back that Jesus appears to them.

Curiously, he instructs the two Marys to do what they were already on their way to do.

*"Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."* [Matt 28.10]

The big difference here, and why Jesus appears to them, is that in their fearfulness they were following the angel's direction. Now they have seen the risen Jesus face to face they are filled with joy. So, it is in both fear and joy that they run to tell the disciples of the resurrection. Fear and joy are held together as they cannot imagine what the future now holds, but they know that Jesus lives, and in that life they too will live.

Jesus is 'God-with-us' and his resurrection reveals that truth first spoken by the angel of the Lord to Joseph in his dream. Now that God's plan of salvation has come to fulfilment in the death and resurrection of his own Son, born of Mary in Bethlehem, we can look backward and see the true significance of God choosing human life to save humanity and all creation.

- We rejoice today with the words 'Christ is risen' and sing our 'alleluias' to God with great joy.
- We recognise that the incarnate one, Jesus, born in Bethlehem, is God-with-us, the Christ who saves all humanity in his love.
- But most importantly, we worship together today and seek to share the faith of the two Marys journeying on to share the good news of the resurrection knowing that Jesus promised us *"where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."*  
[Matt 18.20]

Therefore, we join with Brian Wren in singing:

Stretch out a rainbow from cross to nativity.

Deck out a stable with shepherds and kings,  
angels and miracles, glory and poetry--

Sing my song backwards, till all the world sings!

