

Easter Day

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

Christ is Risen! Alleluia! – That is how we begin our celebrations today. It is the unique greeting we use at Easter reminding ourselves of the central tenet of our faith; that Jesus, the Son of God, rose from the dead revealing resurrection and eternal life as the loving gift of God to all who believe in him.

The story is familiar to us. Mary Magdalen, (Mark's Gospel includes Mary the mother of James, and Salome with her) taking spices to the tomb of Jesus so that they might care for his dead body. They wonder at the dilemma of the stone covering the mouth of the tomb – how will they get in? But the door is open! Even more startling is the presence of an Angel (Mark describes a young man dressed in white) who seeks to reassure them and announces to them the resurrection of Jesus.

Their response is not our response. They flee from the tomb because they are afraid. They run and tell the others because they had to tell someone. Their response is fear and confusion possibly mingled with a little hope. It takes time for them and the rest of the disciples to realise the truth of what the Angel said.

Our response is different because we know the story. We are like the early Christians who knew and recited the story of Jesus' resurrection with confidence and joy. One of the great images of this reality can be found in the Book of Revelation where the worship of heaven rejoices in the triumph of God. In chapter 19 it describes the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures as praising God. They sing "*Amen. Alleluia!*" [Rev 19.4] then join with a great multitude and cry out "*Alleluia! For the Lord our God the almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exalt and give him the glory.*" [Rev 19.6-7] They rejoice because they know the story. We rejoice on this day because we, too, know the story.

(The twenty-four elders symbolise the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve Apostles of Jesus, and the four living creatures symbolise the four Gospels that proclaim Jesus. In other words, they represent the whole Church in heaven and on earth praising God for his loving Salvation.)

The word "Alleluia" is used often in Christian worship, and in Anglican tradition is used often in the Liturgy we use and the Hymns we sing as both rejoicing as we praise God and acknowledgement of the loving gift of resurrection and eternal life. It is a transliteration of the Hebrew and means "Praise the Lord!" So, as we praise Jesus for his love for us and for

all humanity in revealing resurrection and eternal life we sing and proclaim our alleluias with great enthusiasm:

- Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God, was born in Bethlehem to be God with us.
Alleluia!
- Jesus, the Healer, went about this earth healing and bringing wholeness in life to many. Alleluia!
- Jesus, the Teacher, gathered his disciples and taught them God's way of love.
Alleluia!
- Jesus, the Saviour, went to the cross, died a human death in agony and pain bringing forgiveness to sinful humanity, was buried in a garden tomb, yet rose from the grave to reveal resurrection and eternal life as the loving gift of God to all who believe!

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Amen!