



Homily of Archbishop Leo Cushley of St Andrews & Edinburgh

Celebration of the Easter Vigil 2022

St Mary's Metropolitan Cathedral, Edinburgh

My dear friends,

A very happy Easter to you all!

It is always such a pleasure to gather with you here to celebrate the Easter Vigil, the high point of our whole year. As well as sending my Easter greetings to everyone in the diocese, I would like to thank our clergy and people everywhere, for preparing well and celebrating with great faith, dignity and devotion the mysteries at the centre of our faith. Here in particular, I would like to thank Mgr Burke, Fr McMorrin, the diocesan MC, and the clergy and volunteers of this parish who have worked to prepare this, the mother church of the diocese, that our celebration might be a fitting and beautiful one. Thank you!

Over these three days, here at the cathedral we have been looking at the mysteries of our faith through a particular lens, that of courage. We recalled different kinds of courage: we saw how Simon Peter is bold; St Thomas too; Our Lady and St John likewise; and others too, all in their own ways.

We remember how Peter's words are courageous at first, but the roots of his courage aren't very deep as yet, and he runs away in fear. Our Lady and St John show courage simply by standing at the foot of the Cross, with a silent and dignified courage before the mob, and before the terrible majesty of Christ's death on the Cross; and later we will hear from St Thomas again, who will remain bold and outspoken, even to the very highpoint of John's Gospel.

Does any of us have the courage to be counted as a Christian in today's world? Whether we speak out like Thomas and risk all the public consequences, or if we quietly and patiently live out our faith like Our Lady and St John, there is still the need for our faith to be accompanied by a little courage, and the need for it to be nourished.

In the events we remember tonight, however, our faith and courage are truly renewed, starting with the fact of the empty tomb. The women mentioned tonight – Mary of Magdala, Joanna and Mary the mother of James, are surely brave: they had accompanied Jesus while he hung on the Cross, risking public opprobrium, and they now have the courage to go to the tomb with the spices they have prepared. When, however, they find the tomb empty and meet two angels, we are told they are “terrified”. This is something never said of them while they stood at the foot of the Cross, a place much more dangerous for any followers of Jesus. They had been very brave to risk the insults, and worse, from the mob gathered there “to see the spectacle” of Jesus' last hours; but here, in the quiet of the garden, at the tomb, their courage deserts them. Somehow, now that the drama is all over, they *are* terrified by the empty tomb.

Not knowing what to do, they go back to tell the eleven, but “this story of theirs”, we are told, “seemed pure nonsense”, and the eleven do not believe them. Peter then goes to the tomb, and finds it empty as the women had said: he is “amazed” but, we are told, even *he* still doesn't know *what* to think or to believe.

These are people who will all, one day, risk everything to proclaim the Good News that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. All these events will inspire in them great love and joyful courage – but that will only have its beginnings *in the presence of the risen Lord* tomorrow. For now, though, tonight we stand with them amazed, or dumbstruck, or terrified, or nonplussed before the empty tomb. And we, almost without knowing it, wait, like them, for the presence of the risen Lord, who will be known to them tomorrow in the flesh, and known to you and me through His word and sacraments, above all through His divine presence in the Eucharist, when we gather, as we do tonight, solemnly to recall his death.

This is why, as we recall the empty tomb on this night of all others, we renew our faith, and we baptise those who wish to share in our faith in Jesus as the Son of God. Here, tonight, we baptize new believers into Christ's death, in the hope that we may all share one day in His resurrection. We solemnly remember again, with faith and affection, the Lord on the Cross; we join ourselves to him in the tomb; and we await his appearance among us with a humble hope and trust.

We who have already been baptized, now accompany those who are shortly to become Christians in baptism. We all enter once more into the mystery of Christ's death; we go and enter the tomb with our little faith and love and courage; we pray earnestly for those to be baptized; and we pray for ourselves, that our faith in the Lord may be renewed, that our courage may be strengthened, and that our love and devotion for him may grow ever more joyful from this night on.

A very happy Easter to you all!

+ Leo

Archbishop Leo Cushley