

St. Mary's, Stoke D'Abernon

Easter Sunday



April 4th 2021

A Message from Godfrey

It is very unlikely that scholars will ever agree about the precise nature of the relationship between Mary Magdalene and Jesus. However, she does feature quite prominently in the story of the latter days of Jesus' days on earth. It is clear from the fact that she was present at the foot of the cross during the crucifixion and her venturing into the garden long before dawn that Mary loved Jesus more than herself.

Mary had come to grieve, to be near to the body of her beloved friend. Somehow, in the past week things had gone terribly wrong and now Jesus was dead and lying in the tomb. This should not have happened as a week ago it all seemed to be going so swimmingly well with Jesus triumphal entry into Jerusalem, which had seemed so exciting and so full of promise.

The previous evening, Jesus' lifeless body had been taken down from the cross and given to Joseph of Arimathea, a secret disciple, who had decided to give his own newly hewn tomb to Jesus. Here he is joined by Nicodemus, the sceptical Pharisee, who had several encounters with Jesus and had watched and listened to him, and we can only surmise that he had slowly made the transition from scepticism to faith. Now, by his actions, his new found allegiance to Jesus was now public and out in the open.

Mary was up early. Perhaps an anguished night had meant that she had not been able to sleep. Her first thoughts were that the enemies of Jesus, and they were many, had taken the body of Jesus and under cover of darkness had dumped it in the open grave of the common criminals like those who had hung on the cross beside him. It would have been most unusual for a Roman governor to release the body of someone executed for treason, so to assume that fanatics would have defied Pilate's ruling was quite reasonable.

The sight of the empty tomb must have been quite a shock to Mary. She immediately rushes off to inform Peter and another disciple, presumably John the “disciple whom Jesus loved” and they go off to see for themselves. After all, what man was going to take the word of a mere woman in things so startling and bewildering even though it is one who had been amongst the inner circle of followers!

Simon Peter, who had a lot to ground to regain after the last few days of Jesus’ earthly life, making up in new found boldness what he lacked in physical fitness lurched past his fellow disciple into the tomb. Peter saw the discarded grave clothes and must have wondered what on earth was going on.

John, however, was bolstered by Peter’s reaction and entered the tomb. As today’s gospel reminds us, what he saw caused him to believe, but we are not told what it was he actually believed. But on that Sunday they stumbled home, probably more confused than when they had probably been awoken by Mary Magdalene earlier that morning.

As Mary had said, the body was missing, but it does not appear to be a straightforward robbery. Disquieted and with their heads buzzing full of improbable and disturbing thoughts, they return home. Mary does not leave. Where would she go? What would she do in her state of confusion and unknowing? There is nowhere for her but to remain close by even if Jesus’ body has gone. Mary can have no idea that the love that compelled her to stay in the garden will, in a moment cause her to be the witness of the risen Christ. In a moment Jesus’ has turned her life upside down once again.

Mary was a woman who had lost her way in life and had found calm and purpose when she followed Jesus. Mary was a forgiven sinner and, on that first Easter Sunday, was demoralized and in distress and whose evidence had every likelihood of being dismissed in the male dominated culture of the day. But not even the male dominated culture of that time, and sadly today, can dispute the fact that love is so strong that it can survive death, as Jesus love for us witnesses.

The sixteenth century artist, Titian, painted a picture of the scene which can be found in the National Gallery. It shows Mary reaching out to touch Jesus in the garden as she finally realises that the man standing before is the Risen Christ. The title of the painting, *Noli me Tangere*, comes from the Gospels, referring to when Christ did not want his followers to cling to his physical presence. The scene which Titian has chosen to depict is right there in the garden.

During the Second World War, this painting was amongst London's favourite paintings. For a month in 1942 it was, by public demand, the only painting on public display in the National Gallery when thousands of precious paintings had been removed to the safety of Welsh slate mines for safe keeping. Ben Street, in the magazine, *Art 21*, wrote:

“So for the first months of 1942—Noli me Tangere was the only painting in the National Gallery. For Londoners under constant threat of extinction from above, this small High Renaissance painting, produced as a display of virtuosity and ingenuity by a young artist on the make in the aristocratic circles of early 16th century Venice, contained an idea of transcendence that collapsed historical time and lived again at that moment. It might be worth reminding ourselves, especially now, that’s what art is supposed to do.” It might be worth reminding ourselves, especially now, that is what the Jesus story of the Resurrection is all about.

It was cherished because, as the bombs fell, Londoner's found reassurance in this story that love is so strong that it can survive even death, the strong possibility that they faced from the Blitz. It was the same sentiment that was expressed recently in the face of another threat to London, terrorism.

John's testimony is that Jesus is not dead. He is Risen. The historical fact of the resurrection is the foundation stone of the Christian faith. Years later, the Apostle Paul declares the same truth:

"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

We are here today to testify to that same truth that love is so strong that it can survive even death.

Thoughts and prayers,

Godfrey



Bible References 4th – 10th April 2021

Year B	Psalm	First reading	Second reading
Easter Sunday April 4 th	Psalm 118 1-2, 14 - 24	Acts 10 : 34 - 43	John 20 : 1-18
Monday of Easter Week April 5 th	Psalm 16 : 1-2, 6 - end	Acts 2 : 14, 22-32	Matt 28 : 8-15
Tuesday of Easter Week April 6 th	Psalm 33 : 4-5, 18 - end	Acts 2 : 36 - 41	John 20 : 11 - 18
Wednesday of Easter Week April 7 th	Psalm 105 : 1-9	Acts 3 : 1-10	Luke 24 : 13 - 35
Thursday of Easter Week April 8 th	Psalm 8	Acts 3 : 11 - end	Luke 24 : 35 - 48
Friday of Easter Week April 9 th	Psalm 118 : 1-4, 22 - 26	Acts 4 : 1-12	John 21 : 1-14
Saturday April 10 th	Psalm 118 : 1-4, 14 - 21]Acts 4 : 13 - 21	Mark 16 : 9-15

Hyperlinks to Guildford Cathedral Services :

<https://www.guildford-cathedral.org/worship/services>

St Mary's, Thorpe website :

<https://www.stmaryschurchthorpe.co.uk/>

Collect 4th April 2021

Lord of all life and power,
who through the mighty resurrection of your Son
overcame the old order of sin and death
to make all things new in him:
grant that we, being dead to sin
and alive to you in Jesus Christ,
may reign with him in glory;
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit
be praise and honour, glory and might,
now and in all eternity.

Amen



Parish Notices

Sunday Services at St. Mary's

We have decided to close St Mary's for services for the foreseeable future. The Church will remain open for funerals, and private prayer on Thursdays and Sundays from 10am until noon until we advise otherwise.

Hall Opening

Sadly the hall has had to shut but hopefully will be able to start reopening from 12 April and fully open on 17 May.

Post, emails and telephone calls to the Parish office will be monitored and responded to. Please address any general enquiries, in the first instance, to: admin@stmarysstokedabernon.org.uk or Tel. 01932 866005

The weekly Parish leaflet will continue and be sent out on regular email distribution to those on the electoral role and others who have specifically requested it. Similarly, the St Mary's website will be updated to advise of any changes from the current situation.

The St Mary's Chat WhatsApp Group will continue to allow people to share their prayers and thoughts. Godfrey will continue to post his personal messages, including his Sunday message.

For those unable to access WhatsApp, my video messages are also available on this Website Home page and my Sunday messages also appear under **Sermons** on the **Quick Links** on this page.

We will continue with our regular postings of my video clips on Twitter and Instagram, so do follow us on **@StMarysstokedab**



If you are struggling with loneliness and need someone to talk to, or would like help with groceries or anything else, please don't hesitate to call Polly in the Parish Office on 01932 866005 in the first instance.

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY – the APCM will again be held via zoom on Sunday 18th April at 11.30am. Zoom details to follow. A copy of the Annual Report is attached to this newsletter – further copies are available in Church.

Chair Yoga will continue on zoom

Register in advance for this meeting:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZckO-trzljEtGrmiE7 -BsHIGkmVpnJCXR](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZckO-trzljEtGrmiE7-BsHIGkmVpnJCXR)

(If you cut and paste this into your browser it will automatically link you)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Meeting ID; 858 5729 6019 Passcode: 35 44 47

Hey! Don't forget the ...

Here is the list of items most needed for our Foodbank. Please can you help us by buying an item and putting it in one of our collecting bins? Thank you for your help.

URGENTLY NEEDED ITEMS

- **Sponge puddings**
- **Pasta sauce**
- **Tinned vegetables (not sweetcorn, tomatoes or pulses please)**
- **Tinned meat**
- **Razors for men**
- **Shampoo**

