

## Homily by Archbishop Vincent Nichols for Easter Sunday Mass

### 8.10 Westminster Cathedral

Our Mass this morning is quick-moving and full of vitality. Mary Magdalene is running to Simon Peter with astonishing news; Peter and John dash back to the tomb to see for themselves, the young John outstripping the older man. Peter is quick to become a witness to these events: to the preaching and miracles of Jesus, to His death by ‘hanging on a tree’ and to His being raised to life. ‘God’, he says, ‘has ordered us to proclaim this to His people...that all who believe in Jesus will have their sins forgiven through His name.’

Talk of sin is not always popular – unless we are talking about other peoples’ sins. Then we can’t get enough of it! That’s what really sells newspapers! But to appreciate the message of this great Christian feast we have to begin with our own sense of need.

A self-sufficient soul has no sense of Easter!

Mary Magdalene, Peter, John and the others knew better. They knew that in Jesus they had met someone who opened up a way a life beyond the pettiness, jealousies and violence which mark and mar our human nature. Then He was executed and the dream vanished like mist. But with His resurrection from the dead, all is alive again – literally alive in a new and revolutionary way.

Jesus goes beyond everything we know for ourselves. Most importantly He goes beyond our sense of justice. We know all about ‘an eye for an eye’. We know all about ‘making them pay’. But here an innocent person pays an exorbitant price so that we who are guilty may receive a priceless blessing. Far from exacting human justice, this judge steps in to take the punishment himself so that we may walk free and forgiven. And to demonstrate its truth He bursts out of the tomb of death.

What does all this mean? St Paul tells us plainly. Here, he says, is a glimpse of the glory that belongs to all of us. ‘When Christ is revealed – and He is your life – you too will be revealed in all your glory.’ We go from forgiveness to fulfilment; from the status of a sinner to one of sharing in the glory of Christ. This comes to us only slowly. Only by being close to Christ, by learning His Way, by conforming our thinking, our speaking and our acting to His can the change begin to come about. It is the work of the Holy Spirit, the breath of the Spirit within us – inspiration!

This is the message which inspires our finest efforts, both today and across the centuries. The music in this Mass is its fruit: plainchant from the 6<sup>th</sup> century; Palestrina from the 16<sup>th</sup> and two arrangements by composers from our own day.

This is the message that brings us hope: hope that the vision of life embodied in the Risen Christ can find its place in ours, despite all the sin and failure that we know so well; hope that with all the inspiration we can receive we can fashion a society in which graciousness is visible and forgiveness forthcoming; hope that in our homes today we will radiate the joy of the Risen Christ. Alleluia is our song. Christ is truly risen from the dead we know; Victorious king, thy mercy show!

552 words.