

EASTER VIGIL HOMILY 2010

This evening we entered a darkened Church. It is dark and empty of the Lord's presence.

This darkness represents so much of our lives and of our world.

There is the darkness of rumbling anger, revenge and hatred, the ancient antagonisms of humanity. These we witness in the troubled places of the world: in Afghanistan, in Chechnya, in the Sudan, in Pakistan.

The same darkness is present in our own inner lives, in the resentments and envies we feel, in the lust and disordered desires within us, in the isolation and aimlessness which we carry.

The darkness is real.

The reading we have heard this evening explored this darkness: the slavery of a people in Egypt; their isolation in a strange and foreign place; the betrayal of love and the heartache it brings.

But into this darkness comes the light of Christ, victorious and risen.

Slowly His light filled this Cathedral just as it can fill every place. Gradually it reached each one of us until we became 'bearers of the light.

This is the light of our freedom. By it we are set free, liberated, from the darkness within us and about us.

Tonight the Liturgy of the last three days has come to its climax. During these liturgies we have explored the service given by Christ, in the washing of the feet; the Sacrifice offered by Christ, in which His service is completed; and now the liberation which He brings.

It is liberation from slavery, from every addiction, and an entry into our promised land.

It is liberation from infidelity and betrayal and an entry into wholesome and faithful loving, made visible in Christ Jesus.

It is liberation from idolatry and obsession, and an entry into the true worship of the living and loving God.

As St Paul tell us, by being one with Christ in his death we become one with Him in His freedom.

Today we know that our human family has freedom set before it.

Here all is gloriously made clear, not in a theory or an ideology, but in Christ, a person, to whom we can relate.

There is not longer any need to live in confusion and disharmony, but rather we are invited to follow this Way on which our liberation is at hand.

Now we too may walk the road of service, sacrifice and liberation.

But most importantly we know what precisely lies at the heart of this liberation, what precisely is the gift we are given, what precisely is the link between the flame of this Paschal candle and the candle that each of us carried.

This is it: through the death and resurrection Christ, each of us is made a sharer in the life of God. Through this mystery it is no longer simply I that live, but Christ lives is me.

This divine life is in my soul. This is the life I am now to nurture. This is the candle in the wind. Now I can live this life in the service I offer to others, in the self-sacrifice I make for others, and I can hope to see this life carry me through the gate of mortal death into the eternal life of heaven.

Christ is Risen, Alleluia!

He is our Light, our freedom and our hope. Alleluia!

+Vincent Nichols
Archbishop of Westminster