

Easter

Happy Easter! Jesus is risen from the dead! Those proclamations will be made between small groups of people in households across the land, in the media and over the phone and the internet. At this time the greeting of Happy Easter and the proclamation that Jesus is risen will to a certain extent remain 'hidden', continuing our theme begun on Holy Thursday evening. Being unable to join in large numbers to celebrate, no outside public plays and worship, such as Wintershall and Dawn services and having the news dominated by the virus and related issues may mean that the Easter proclamation gets less attention than usual. We might think that the usual coverage isn't all that comprehensive, but that discussion is for another day. We may be back to our roots. Jesus progressively revealed his resurrection as we see in the pages of the New Testament. There is a well-known quote from St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians which illustrates this: *"Well then, in the first place, I taught you what I had been taught myself, namely that Christ died for our sins, in accordance with the scriptures; that he was buried; and that he was raised to life on the third day, in accordance with the scriptures; that he appeared first to Cephas and secondly to the twelve. Next he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died; then he appeared to James, and then to all the apostles; and last of all he appeared to me too; it was as though I was born when no one expected it."*¹

Our celebration and proclamation of Easter may well begin today but we could also prepare ourselves for a slow and progressive spreading of the good news. After all the Easter season continues until the celebration of Pentecost. In this time of 'social distancing' and 'lockdown' we have been thinking about the hidden early life of Jesus to see if this may help us in our relative isolation from others. We have been considering those few paragraphs in the Catechism of the Catholic Church about those hidden years of Jesus. The final paragraph says this, *"The finding of Jesus in the temple is the only event that breaks the silence of the Gospels about the hidden years of Jesus. Here Jesus lets us catch a glimpse of the mystery of his total consecration to a mission that flows from his divine sonship: 'Did you not know that I must be about my Father's work?' Mary and Joseph did not understand these words, but they accepted them in faith. Mary 'kept all these things in her heart' during the years Jesus remained hidden in the silence of an ordinary life."*²

'Happy Easter' and 'Jesus is risen' will certainly break the silence where and when it is heard this Easter. But as we will not be in the rush of social engagements, pilgrimages, entertaining and so on, is there an opportunity to ponder and to 'keep these things in our hearts'? Our Lady did this more in silence rather than engagement. In his resurrection from the dead Jesus gives everlasting life to our work as Christians, that is our prayer, evangelisation and service. The more we progressively deepen our own understanding of this life-giving event the more we will be able to proclaim, step by step, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, when and where the opportunities arise in the next few months. Happy Easter and Jesus is risen, this our Father's work and in these few days we have a bit of time to prepare

¹ 1 Corinthians 15: 3-7

² Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 534

to 'break the silence' of Lent and lockdown with this good news which brings hope to our world. But maybe we must keep these things in our hearts for the moment. But we will need them and so will others. Sheila Cassidy, many years ago, wrote a book called *Easter people in a Good Friday World*. It's a good title for our times. For the time ahead we will need a deep reservoir of Easter love for those whose lives will have been profoundly changed by events they never thought they would see and experience. Jesus is risen, the victory of life and love over suffering and death has been achieved and one we all certainly need now.