

Sunday 16th March, 2017
Year A - Easter Vigil with Baptism of Kirstie Pulham
Easter Vigil Readings (Genesis, Exodus, Ezekiel)
Romans 6:1-11
Matthew 28:1-10

In the name of the Trinity; Creator, Redeemer, and Life-Giver...

This Great Vigil of Easter is all about story. And we Christians are a people of story.

Today, we act out the story of the light of Christ coming into the world as we light the first fire of Easter and process the Paschal candle into the Church; the story of the light of Christ coming into a dark and hurting world. Our world.

We light our own candles from the Christ candle because for each of us, in ways small and large, our own story has been set afire by the story of Jesus Christ. We sit and ponder stories-- the creation, the flood, the crossing of the Red Sea, the story of the people of God. Our story. And this morning Kirstie will be baptized. Baptized into the Church of God. Officially welcomed as a child of God—an already much loved member of this parish, St. Martin's.

As with all of us, Kirstie has her own life story, but this morning her story changes. She will make her promises to God. She will be baptized by water and anointed with oil. This morning Kirstie will be marked as Christ's own for ever.

And on this most Holy morning all our stories are woven together as God's people—past, present and future. We have made it through the 40 days of Lent and Holy Week. We have arrived at the threshold—Easter. Resurrection. New life.

Easter, however, is not about a one day event. Easter is about how we choose to live our lives. Easter is about living as transformed people of Christ. Easter is, if you will excuse the pun, about putting all our eggs into one basket, a basket called hope.

Easter is opening our eyes to resurrection moments that confront us every day. It is about asking the question, how do we live in this broken, battered world as Easter people?

The answer? It is with God's help. With God's love. A love made visible to us every single day when we love one another. Easter is our story, our way of life. Remember, friends! We are Easter people! We are Easter people.

Indeed. But this does not mean that we live protected sheltered happy go lucky lives. Like everyone else in the world our lives harbor edges, if not deep pools, of sadness and suffering. But what it does mean is that regardless of whether we live or die, we are God's beloved children—always.

Being Easter people means we live our lives knowing that life is stronger than death, hope is always stronger than fear, and nothing is stronger than the love of God.

This week, in the Northern Egyptian city of Tanta, Coptic Christians returned to the very church - St. George's - which had been targeted by Islamic State terrorists on Palm Sunday. They came to bury those killed in that attack, to mourn their deaths, and to show their enemies that they had not won. And they will return there again today, to celebrate the same mystery which we gather to explore this morning - this most amazing story of God overcoming evil and death, in the resurrection we proclaim. That is our story.

The story in Egypt for the Copts is a terrible one, to be sure. But I believe that their story will not end there. Because the Easter people of Egypt will celebrate the mystery again and again. And they, as well as with people in other parts of the world will step in, step up, speak out and continue to fight for those who have no one to fight for them.

The story of God's people goes on.

We gather to remember an outspoken man, a man whose heart belonged to the poor and the suffering and those pushed to the edges of society. A man named Jesus who was crucified, assassinated, almost 2000 years ago.

But we also gather to proclaim that Jesus lives. Christ is risen in us so that we might live as Easter people. People of hope and purpose and love. People who can offer hope and purpose and love to others. We are Easter people. We are marked as Christ's own for ever.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!.

In the name of God. Amen