

Our retired priest writes

What a gift for the person listed to write this month's opening article for the magazine; Easter Sunday, moveable feast that it is, landing on the first of this month, yes, April Fools' Day! A significant enough day to appear automatically in my electronic calendar and presumably because it begins with 'A' and so alphabetically it appears before Easter. To many people, if it weren't for chocolate eggs and bunnies, that may well be their order of significance. But why is this such a gift to me? (It's really hard to come up with ideas for these articles!)

It's because it reminded me of St Paul's words to the Corinthians

*'If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised;
and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation
has been in vain and your faith has been in vain.'
(1 Corinthians 15:13-14).*

In other words if there is no resurrection then we are fooling ourselves, we are complete fools.

On Easter Day, however our liturgy will be full of joyful acclamation that there is a resurrection and that Jesus has been raised from the dead and lives for ever. The word 'Alleluia' which we've not sung or spoken since the Sunday before Lent began will be repeatedly spoken and sung. When I was a vicar I made Alleluia flags for the children (and me) to wave each time they heard Alleluia. There was a lot of flag waving! Our service will include the Gloria again. The church which has been devoid of flowers during Lent and stripped of any other adornments on Maundy Thursday will be decorated with beautiful flower arrangements. Our finest white and gold altar frontal will be in use along with its matching vestments. We will proclaim several times that 'the Lord is risen, he is risen indeed, Alleluia!' as the Paschal candle is lit at the 8.00 o'clock service and then as it is processed into the service at 9.30. You might even find I slot in a few extra acclamations because I have the privilege of presiding that day. Alleluia is added to various responses too. You will know it's Easter Day!

If Jesus did rise from the dead three days after he was crucified, as the gospels tell and I believe, then not to believe would be foolish because as Paul says, 'for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ' (1 Corinthians 15.22). It means we are freed from sin, unconditionally forgiven and made God's children and so much more.

My friends, we are no April Fools. We are Christians celebrating the truth on which our faith depends. Let's sing and speak out our Alleluias, our God be praised, on Easter Sunday and do so with conviction, joy and celebration.

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