

## Easter – Easter Vigil 2024

### Genesis 1:1 – 2:2, Gospel Mark 16:1-7

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Very early on this morning of Holy Saturday I woke up to say my prayers as usual. When I was finished it was still early so I decided to go back to bed for an hour or so. As I was drifting off in a lazy dreamy state, I saw an image of the Tabernacle that resides in the Sacred Heart side chapel in Ashby, where the Blessed Sacrament was reposing after Good Friday. I heard a soft voice say '*Come visit me*'. I rolled over thinking I might visit in a gentle dream. I heard the voice once again say '*Come visit me*' with an image of the tabernacle, and I then saw the figure of St Gemma Galgani racing to the local church to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. I was chastened, and so I rose out of bed, dressed and went into the Church which was illuminated by a soft light. I knelt on the front step of the Sanctuary to pray the Rosary, without really looking at the Tabernacle. My mind was so beset with distraction that I could not pray. So, I looked up and saw the Tabernacle.

Now I have seen the Tabernacle many times. I have polished it, I have celebrated Mass in front of it, I have placed the Blessed Sacrament for Adoration before it and I knew the image that was embossed on it, but I can honestly say that this is the first time that I really saw it.

It is an image of the tree of life. Close up, it has a quite simple cross, hammered into a silver plate, with a large semi-precious stone in the centre. The upper half of the cross is surrounded by some leaves, and

what appear to be bunches of grapes. But when I gazed upon it, in that moment it seemed as if the glowing cross-beam of the cross, was bedecked with luminous blossoms etched in white gold, and they were irradiating such brilliant white light that it stunned me. It was mesmerising in its beauty. Like the flowers of a cherry tree catching the sun's light, against the background of a darkening sky. The whole tabernacle was transformed, conveying its meaning to me over the next few minutes.

The first reading of the Vigil Mass begins for us the story of God and his creation. That as male and female we might complement each other, care and rejoice in God's creation, and participate it. Most importantly that by living in God's image we might know Him and be complete. The link between this first biblical narrative and the rest that follow, makes the assumption that we know what happens immediately next. What happens is that there is a Serpent in paradise. The serpent tricks the first woman, Eve, into believing that the one thing that God has forbidden them to do is the most desirable thing to do; namely, to eat the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil.<sup>1</sup> Eve chooses to eat the fruit, believing in the power it will bring her, and shares it with the first man, Adam. This results in them losing paradise and their right relationship with God. Life becomes hard because they desired to be like God themselves.

All the rest of the biblical stories that follow, all that you have heard this sacred night, are of God calling the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve - that is you and me - back to Himself, back into the proper relationship

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 2:17

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with Him. But we continued to eat from the Tree of Knowledge and we continued to die.

This night, all this wreckage has been restored. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, voluntarily dies on the Cross, so that we might eat freely of the Tree of Life, and undo the damage done by the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. The Cross is the tree of Life, and to eat its fruit is to eat the Sacrifice of Christ, His Body and Blood. What was taken has been undone by what is given.

The light on the Tabernacle fades, the stone on the grave has been rolled back, but the image and the truth remain.

Rejoice and be glad.