

Easter 3 2026

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

Over these past weeks we have been standing, quite deliberately, in the shock of Easter—not smoothing it out, not explaining it away, but letting its full weight press in on us. We have stood with the women at the tomb as the earth shook. We have stood with the disciples in that locked room as Jesus showed them his hands and his side. We have been confronted again and again with the stubborn, physical reality of the resurrection.

Not an idea. Not a feeling. Not a spiritual metaphor.

But a body. Wounded. Raised. Present.

And today, the readings push us further still—not only into *what happened*, but into what that reality sets loose in the world.

In the Gospel from Gospel of Matthew, we are given a strange and telling detail. The guards—those same guards who shook with fear at the angel, who saw the stone rolled away, who witnessed something they could not explain—go and report to the chief priests.

And what happens?

Not investigation. Not wonder. Not even denial in the usual sense.

But a cover-up.

Money changes hands. A story is constructed. “Say that his disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.”

It is, if you think about it, a rather weak explanation. Sleeping guards who somehow know what happened while they were asleep. A body stolen under the noses of trained soldiers who had already been terrified into paralysis.

But the point is not whether the story is convincing. The point is that a story is needed at all.

Something has happened that cannot simply be ignored.

The authorities do not respond to a rumour or a vague religious experience. They respond to an event that has left witnesses—uncomfortable, inconvenient witnesses—who have seen something real.

And so they do what human beings so often do when confronted with something that threatens to overturn their world: they try to control the narrative.

They try to contain it.

They try to make it go away.

But in doing so, they inadvertently confirm the very thing they are trying to deny.

If nothing had happened, there would be nothing to explain.

If the tomb were not empty, there would be no need for a story.

If the resurrection were merely an internal spiritual experience of the disciples, the machinery of denial would be unnecessary.

But here it is—clumsy, urgent, revealing.

The resurrection has left a mark on the world that cannot be erased.

And that matters, because it brings us back to where we have been these past weeks: that the resurrection is not a private event. It is not contained within the inner lives of the disciples. It spills out into the public world. It disturbs systems. It provokes reaction.

It is, quite simply, *real*.

And in the reading from Acts of the Apostles, we see what happens next.

Peter stands up—this same Peter who, not long before, had denied Jesus in fear—and now he proclaims, boldly and publicly: “Let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

There is no hesitation here. No softening of the claim.

And the response is immediate: the crowd is “cut to the heart.”

Something about this proclamation lands not as argument, but as truth.

“What should we do?” they ask.

And Peter’s answer is not complicated. Repent. Be baptised. Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And then he says something that reaches far beyond that moment: “For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.”

The promise.

What is this promise?

It is easy to hear that word and let it remain vague, as though it refers to something generally positive, something reassuring but undefined.

But the reading from First Epistle of Peter gives it substance.

“You have been born anew,” it says, “not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.”

And again: “You have been ransomed... not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.”

The promise is nothing less than this: that through the death and resurrection of Jesus, a new kind of life has been opened to us.

A life that is not subject to decay in the same way.

A life that is not ultimately held captive by sin or death.

A life that begins now—“born anew”—and is grounded in the living, enduring reality of what God has done in Christ.

And notice how physical this language remains.

“Precious blood.”

“Born anew.”

“Imperishable seed.”

This is not abstract spirituality. It is the language of bodies, of birth, of life that takes root and grows.

The same God who raised the wounded body of Jesus is at work bringing forth new life in us—not by discarding our humanity, but by redeeming it.

And this is the promise that is “for you, for your children, and for all who are far away.”

It is not limited.

It is not contained.

It is not reserved for a select few.

It stretches across generations and across distances—geographical, cultural, even spiritual.

“For all who are far away...”

Those words carry both hope and challenge.

Hope—because no one is beyond the reach of what God has done in Christ.

Challenge—because it reminds us that this promise is not ours to possess or control.

It is ours to receive.

And to live.

Which brings us to the final question: what does it look like to live in the light of this?

The reading from 1 Peter is very clear: “Prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring... do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had... be holy in all your conduct.”

This is not about moral perfection. It is about alignment.

If the resurrection is real—if Jesus truly is raised, wounded and yet alive—then our lives are drawn into a new reality.

We no longer live as though death has the final word.

We no longer live as though this world, as it is, is all there is.

We no longer live as though our lives are defined solely by what is perishable.

Instead, we live as people who have been given a living hope.

People who are learning, slowly and imperfectly, to reflect the life of the one who has called us.

People who love one another deeply—“from the heart,” as the letter says—because we know that we are held together not by accident, but by grace.

And perhaps this is where all three readings come together.

The authorities try to contain the resurrection—but they cannot.

Peter proclaims it—and people are drawn into its reality.

The Church is called to live it—not as an idea, but as a transformed way of being in the world.

A life shaped by the knowledge that Christ is risen.

A life that bears witness—quietly, persistently—to a reality that cannot be undone.

Because the tomb is empty.

The wounds are still visible.

The promise is still being offered.

To us.

To our children.

To those who are far off.

And so we are invited, again, not just to admire this from a distance, but to step into it.

To receive the promise.

To live the new life it opens.

And to trust that the God who raised Jesus from the dead is even now at work—drawing the whole world, in ways seen and unseen, into that same life that cannot perish.

Christ is risen.

And the promise is for all