

One of the great strengths of this parish is our Journey in Faith programme. In a busy, pressurized world, we have precious little time to talk about the things that really matter. But on Thursday evenings a dozen or so people gather in the parish room and with the help of a catechist, priest or deacon, try to tease out and understand the various aspects of Catholic teaching.

One session, back in the winter, we were looking at sin, at Adam and Eve, the Garden of Eden, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and that infamous serpent who leads humanity into sin and disobedience. After some thought, one of our catechumens, and as of yesterday a baptised and confirmed Catholic Christian, suggested that maybe humanity **needed** to sin. Maybe this was all part of God's plan. Maybe this was the only way men and women could become fully responsible adults, the only way that we could have any kind of self-awareness, the only way we could begin to become partners and friends of God Himself. Or, as we sang last night in the Exultet, "O truly necessary sin of Adam...O happy fault, that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer".

The ultimate message of Easter is hope. "The night shall be as bright as day." A life of blessedness is possible. A real relationship with God is possible. A real partnership with God in creating and renewing our world is possible. Real communion with God and with each other is possible.

None of our loving and caring is going to be wasted. Even our pain and suffering now has meaning and purpose. Death has no more dominion over us.

With Christ we have already died, and our true life, our real life is now *hidden with Christ in God*. Eternity and blessedness begin now, not as an endless vista of sitting on clouds and playing harps, but as deep joy, true peace, an intensity of love, but a depth and an intensity that knows no end, that just keeps on growing, deepening and finally exploding in God Himself.

And all because of today, all because the stone had been moved away from the tomb, all because the tomb was empty, all because this man from Nazareth had given himself up into the hands of evil men and is now raised up on high and sits for ever at the right hand of the Father. This was always God's plan. Here is humanity as it is supposed to be. Here is humanity as it can be and as it will be.

A Happy Easter to you all.