

Chaplain's Easter Message 2011

On the south western shore of Lake Michigan, before a crowd of 125,000 in Grant Park in the city of Chicago on 4th November 2008, Barack Obama made what many regard as his finest speech. It echoed the great speeches in the recent history of America by Martin Luther King and John F Kennedy. In his speech Barack Obama used what has become a memorable phrase, "At this defining moment", adding"Change has come".

Googling the phrase 'Defining Moment' provides the following dictionary definition: *'an occurrence that typifies or determines all related events that follow'*.

The first Easter Day was in itself a defining moment. Before Easter Day there had been the sadness, the grief and the loss of Good Friday associated with the Cross on the green hill outside the city wall. Then on Holy Saturday and the thought of the Garden Tomb must have left those first disciples of Jesus with feelings of emptiness and of not knowing what to make of it all.

All this was transformed in a way which must have taken the disciples' breath away. The visit by Mary Magdalene to the tomb early on that first Easter Day to anoint the body of Jesus, finding instead the empty tomb, and then the encounter she had with the risen Jesus whom she took to be the gardener became for her and the other disciples a defining moment.

Then on the road to Emmaus that same evening, two disciples are joined by a stranger except when they all sit down to eat together that moment is transformed when Jesus takes some bread and breaks it and they recognize him.

'Defining Moments' and indeed 'change had come'. The miracle and mystery of that first Easter Day is very hard to capture in words, but what undoubtedly took place determined the future lives and experiences of those first disciples.

The celebration of the mystery and miracle of Easter begins with the empty tomb and ends with the coming of God's Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost otherwise known as Whit Sunday.

All this is God's gift to us here and now. We are invited to embrace and share in the timeless miracle and mystery of Easter.

St. Peter's experience of the Risen Christ led him to write in his first letter, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ".

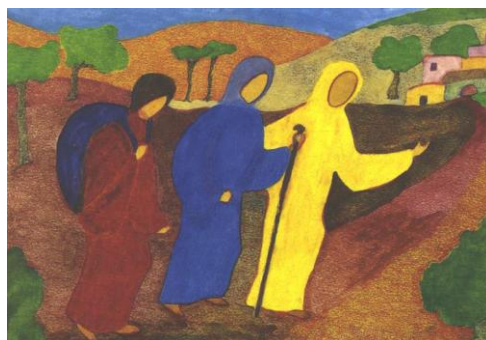
To embrace this hope can be for us too a defining moment as we share Christ's risen life in this world and the next.

May this Easter-tide and all that it means be a time of blessing for you. As the hymn 'Lord of the Dance' puts it,

"They buried my body
and they thought I'd gone;
but I am the dance
and I still go on.

I'll live in you
if you'll live in me:
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he".

May you be blessed with the joy of Easter and may God bless our Association and all our members living and departed



'The Road to Emmaus' Frère Sylvain © Taizé Communauté