

## EASTER 1 Sermon – Holy Trinity Church Geneva

*TEXTS Exodus 14 :10 to end, 15 :20-21 ; John 20 :19 to end.*

Today is the first Sunday after remembering the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus last weekend. Our joyful Eastertide is continuing as our Gospel reading shows.

And what of our first reading in Exodus, written centuries before, very much a central point of the Jewish traditions in which Jesus and his first disciples learnt and grew?

Here we are presented with a situation in which God is rescuing his people. After the Passover, the Jewish people had been allowed to leave Egypt, on the way to a new future, when Pharaoh changed his mind and his army chased after them. Terrified, these ex-slaves turned to Moses. But God was in charge – as Moses obeyed him, the Jews passed over dry land, then the water returned and destroyed Pharaoh's army. Miriam and the women led the song of thanksgiving.

A wonderful, amazing rescue that has never been forgotten.

Even more so, Jesus' Resurrection, stunning his believers, is still inspiring and leading us and millions over the world in the way of salvation, hope and joy. New life! And we move into the way he leads us, and prepares us for us.

But hold on a minute! What about those rescued Jews? As we read in the book of Exodus, their future was NOT an enjoyable journey through the desert. Far from it: who was this God who had saved them? Look at these new situations! Panic? Could they really trust God? It took them a long time to learn.

We, in comparison have learnt so much more about Jesus, in the Bible, the New Testament, and in the lives of many who have gone before us – not just the saints, but those within our families and communities that we have known, who have helped us and inspired us.

In our Gospel, we see the community Jesus had created learning and growing. Jesus joins them; he was accepted, gave them peace, a mission and the Holy Spirit to be with them. But Thomas wasn't there, and there was no way he could believe them.

John's Gospel continues with Jesus returning to the disciples, when Thomas was there. The contrast for Thomas is so great that he sees Jesus for what Jesus truly is – not just My Lord, but even my God!

Wonderful! But for me, what is even more wonderful is what Jesus said next:

'Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

For that includes me, and each of you.

While researching this sermon, I came across the idea that in fact Thomas is a great example to us that our God is a God of second chances; a second chance to believe, a second chance to be trusted, like Saint Peter; a second chance to live. However we may feel, our God never deserts us.

As we look forward to our own futures this Easter, we are aware that life following Jesus is not always easy. For many people now, the world seems more insecure, and that includes us living in Geneva. But we know we are not alone: Jesus is with us, and the Holy Spirit can guide us. We are not alone. And we have our Christian Community around us to support us together.

And not just in Geneva. In our other home places, people we know and love, who want to raise us up, never to diminish us, hold us in prayer and support us.

And in Easter, Jesus, first-born from the dead, makes it clear that those who belong to him go on to be with him; that human existence does not end in the tomb. So we can trust that we will once again see those we love and have lost in the past.

For many of us this has been reinforced by the gratitude and celebration through last week for the life of Pope Francis. A man who has reached out to all humanity, particularly the poor and weak, and spoken of the immensity of God's love for us.

Let us walk forward together in that love, admitting to the God who knows us the times of fear and despair that can strike us. This God who is carrying us through to a walk with Jesus.

Amen.

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