

I am told that the first time you do a bungee jump, it is absolutely terrifying,and exhilarating,.... and liberating. But to begin with, it is mostly terrifying, because there is no going back. I have a friend who having climbed to the top of an extremely tall construction over a river in New Zealand discovered that all that secured you was a piece of velcro attached around your ankles and then dive, headfirst towards the river several hundred feet below. He was immobilised with fear, and told there was no going back down, so he was literally pushed off.

He claimed to have enjoyed it after the event, but I notice that he never repeated the experience.

To leap into the unknown, to put your faith in something you cannot test for yourself, or feels very unreliable, is very risky.

That is what happened to Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome. They had just had the most extraordinary news given to them by a stranger, an unknown man, whom they had found where they expected the body of Jesus to be. He said to them:

Go, tell his disciples and Peter that Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.'

But they didn't. They went out and fled from the tomb, and they said nothing to anyone, because they were absolutely terrified. Of course they were, they had been pushed out into the unknown, into seriously scary territory, where logic told them that this was a political ruse, that someone had stolen Jesus' body, but where this stranger told them that Jesus was alive, that the laws of nature were being reversed. And that's where the original gospel of St Mark ends. They were afraid.

However, more was added later, and it continues to be added, for the gospel story does not end. It continues in us.

When we look around at the world, this familiar world that we love, there is much that is beautiful, but there is also so much hatred, so much that is ugly or evil: the fanatics that kill others because of their religion or race; the rulers that oppress in order to hang on to their wealth and power, who live opulent lifestyles while others go hungry; and the businesses that exploit desperately poor workers and have absolutely no regard for the environment. It is easy to identify with Good Friday, with pain, with destruction. The evidence of Christ crucified is all around us.

But this morning, very early, as the Easter Candle was lit and brought into the church, we saw the possibility of being free of all that mess, of entering into new, unknown territory - the territory of hope and faith.

That is scary. The wars, the hatred, the squalor may be unpleasant, but we know what we are dealing with. But this hope is about a new way of being, it is about change, there is no going back.

Unlike Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome, we have not been pushed, and will not be pushed. We can stay safely watching, waiting, decide today is not the day to jump..... perhaps tomorrow, or next year.

The record of the four gospels, and the writings of Luke in the Acts of the Apostles all tell us that as each disciple made that leap, they gained in strength, they received the power of the Holy Spirit, and they eventually lost their fear. They were able to live lives that attempted to follow the way of Christ, they were able to teach in words and deeds the wonder of God's love. They changed and they changed those they met.

And still we watch and wait for that day when we feel certain enough to let go.

No more waiting.

Today is the day to jump, to follow those that have gone before us, to conquer the fear and experience the exhilaration, the liberation, the totally overwhelming sensation of surrender to faith: Faith that is not certain, faith that may feel totally inadequate, but faith that even if the size of a mustard seed, will be sufficient to allow hope to flourish.

Hope for a better world. Hope for better relationships. Hope for an end to oppression, an end to war, an end to corruption, an end to poverty, an end to destruction. Hope expressed as love for all peoples, love for this beautiful fragile world, love for the one who holds all matter in existence.

Each year, for at least the past thousand years, Easter has been celebrated on this site with resounding alleluia's, with candles lit, with hymns of praise. Throughout that thousand years, many have made the leap of faith that not only changed their life for ever, but also changed the lives of those that came after them. Those faithful people brought the Easter light into the darkest places, during those many times of fear - during the reformation, the black death, the civil war, the plague. They kept hope alive. They kept faith even when faith seemed tenuous and stretched to breaking point.

Our faith, our hope, our love, can not only reach out to people today, but it will stretch forward to those generations still to come.

Hold the light high, for Christ is risen,

He is risen indeed

Alleluia.