It’s Easter Sunday afternoon. We made it – for another year!

For some of you, this may seem a strange way to start an address – for others, it will make perfect sense. We have dramatized our way through Palm Sunday, and Good Friday. We have contemplated in Compline, meandered through Maundy Thursday, stridden through the Stations, and yawned through the Easter Vigil. We have shouted and clapped in the Easter Eucharist, and now we are here at evensong, all but spent. Another year done, and wonderful as ever.

I’m an enthusiast for our sister religions, and our fellowship in faith with sisters and brothers from different traditions, but actually I believe that the central events of the Christian faith, and the truth of Jesus Christ holds light and darkness, the shifting colours of life, in a uniquely powerful way. And no where is that more true than in Holy Week. And even more so this year when we had the remarkable co-incidence of Good Friday, March 25th, the same day as the Feast of the Annunciation – the news of the birth and death of God held together in juxtaposition, encouraging us to know that nothing is beyond the grasp of God.

I wonder what sort of week you have had? We had been reading and praying and worshipping our way through a week that, as we know, started with the cries of Hosanna, moved through escalating conflict with political religious authorities, and revealed truths that could not have been imagined. It took us into torture and interrogation, false accusation, mob rule, and bloody death. It took us into despair and abandonment and confusion.

And now it has taken into an arguable greater confusion – the confusion of an empty tomb, and fleeting glimpses of a saviour thought to have been lost in the past, an now somehow disappearing into a future instead, calling us always forward.

In your prayers today, talk to Jesus about what sort of a week he has just had. And put it alongside your own week. Don’t get me wrong: I’m not for a moment suggesting you do this in order to make whatever suffering – or for that matter whatever celebration – you are experiencing seem insignificant alongside that of Jesus. Rather, I would like us to ponder how whatever experience we find ourselves caught by, that it can be embraced and caught up in the narrative of this week that we have just walked through, once again. A week that is embodied in this Cathedral, in its built narrative from celebration and glory (we must recall the former glory of St. Michael’s to understand the tragedy of its destruction), to desolation and ruin, to new hope and journey into light, towards the hope of Glory woven in the tapestry.

The two readings we have heard this afternoon say it all: in Isaiah, line after powerful line, building a narrative of God’s care and commitment to his beloved people. There is no stopping God, once he is on the move, says the prophet – and his people will praise him from a place of salvation. And Paul in Corinthians, in one of my favourite passages: if you don’t believe what I’m telling you about the resurrection, he says – go and talk to one of these people. They all saw Jesus, after he was raised from the dead! Your belief is not based on wild imagination, but on testimony of witnesses.

One of the loveliest things in this morning’s service was the sight of children beetling around the back of the Nave during the sermon looking for Easter eggs. Back in the days when I was a parish priest, we had an Easter egg hunt where we had hidden Egg shaped cards with the names of all those Paul lists in this passage. When they were all
found, we had the bearers line up at the front, declaring one by one, ‘my name’s Cephas and I saw Jesus’ ...‘my name’s James and I saw Jesus’ ...and so on.

Today, we hear from one another about how each of us has met Jesus. And what gives that story power is that he has met us not just on the day of celebration, but has met us and brought us with him through the whole of the story of last week. He meets us in joy as well as in sadness, in celebration as well as bitter regret, in feasting and fasting – he meets us now.

I’d like to finish with a poem which I’ve used before, but which continues to speak to me of the sheer amazement of today, and the end of this most extraordinary week. It’s called ‘Christ Came Juggling’, and it’s by Eugene Warren:

Christ Came Juggling

Christ came juggling from the tomb,
flipping and bouncing death’s stone pages,
tossing those narrow letters high
against the roots of dawn spread in cloud.
This Jesus, clown, came dancing
in the dust of Judea, each slapping step
a new blossom spiked with joy.

Hey! Listen—that chuckle in the dark,
that clean blast of laughter behind—
Christ comes juggling our tombs
tossing them high and higher yet,
until they hit the sun and break open
and we fall out, dancing and juggling
our griefs like sizzling balls of light.