

Reverend Jo Farnworth writes....

“Jesus on the loose in Droylsden!”

It was a great blessing to have Fr Dennis from the Community of the Resurrection in Mirfield to spend Holy Week and Easter with us. His words throughout the week certainly helped me to rediscover the mystery and the joy of the resurrection and I hope that those of you who came to these services experienced the same.



Fr Dennis' final sermon on Easter Day stuck in my mind particularly, with his image of 'Jesus on the loose in Droylsden'. The resurrected Jesus is free, able to roam wherever he chooses, no longer constrained by an earthly body. As we are on our journey of Mission Action Planning, it seems to me that this is a very helpful picture. Jesus is here in Droylsden, on the loose, going where he chooses not where we direct him to go. Our task is to discover where he is and meet him there in a way of his choosing. In May, we will be returning to look in more detail at our Mission Action Plan and so I'd like to encourage you to reflect on Fr Dennis' Easter message as a way of preparing ourselves for this and continuing our task of working out what kind of church God is calling us to be. Here is the final part of his Easter sermon about Jesus on the loose!

“We have heard the Easter story over and over and we know how it will turn out. But, it is all brand new to Mary, and she is lost in bereaved confusion when confronted by the unbelievable. On Calvary's cross, Jesus was nailed down by the hands of hate. In contrast, now he is held in the arms of love. So why would he want to break away from that? It is because Christ wants to love and to be loved by everyone for the rest of eternity.

Unbelievable as it must have seemed, Mary sees that the cold stone of a tomb cannot hold Jesus. This should be great news for Mary – but although she grabs hold of his feet, he tells her that she must not hold onto him. Instead she is to leave him and go tell this good news to the other disciples. And then they are to travel to Galilee, where Jesus will meet them.

What really is at stake here in Jesus telling Mary not to hold him the way that she wanted? ...the way that her breaking heart desires to hold her Lord? It is something so important that we cannot fully understand Easter unless we get this point.

Every time that we think we have hold of Jesus; we discover that he won't stay still for long. Our relationship with Christ is not static, locking us fixedly into a stationary position. Jesus has places that he wants to take us, people he wants us to meet and tasks in which he wants us to participate.

Jesus Christ is free from the grave and roaming at large in the world. He will not be confined again. He is on the loose. But he is **not** escaping from us. He is not avoiding intimacy as one who is afraid of commitment, or afraid to embrace us or to really love us. No, Jesus is on the loose in order to free us from every grave in which we find ourselves. Christ wants us to live our lives looking forward, living in love the abundant life that is God's desire for each and every one of us.

Christ still is on the loose right here in Droylsden, and this is the news that comes to us on this Easter day. The message is that Jesus is free from the grave. This means that Christ is free. Why? In order to set **you** free!

This is where Easter becomes personal for each one of us. If Christ is going to free us from the grave of fear, then **we** have to let go of it ourselves. We have to die to it, because if we are intent on holding onto our fears, whatever they may be, then Christ cannot lead us into a future of hope.

You are being called to embrace love as a gift from the divine life giver. Jesus is on the loose, and he is inviting you to live fully in love. Christ still is on the loose right here in Droylsden. Through the Holy Spirit, he can be doing resurrections within us anywhere and at any time. The Good News of Easter is that resurrections to new life still are happening because Jesus Christ is not encased within a tomb but he is very much on the loose. So there is no telling what God may be up to next here in Droylsden, but this we can know for sure: The Saviour knows your name because **YOU** are the Lord's beloved, and he wants you to walk on this journey with him!"

Revd Jo Farnworth