

Easter 2024

Dear Friends and Faithful,

It has again been a joy to join together in community of love, worship and praise for Lent and Holy Week, crowned in Easter renewal, with its undoubted certain promise of love, light and life. We are, indeed, renewed first and foremost in our worship, praising God whom we know primarily in his self-revelation in his Son, our risen Lord, and the work of the Holy Spirit. From this great celebration grow all our other duties, never a chore, always a delight.

Having only left Christmas a short while ago, for most, as our world seems more and more secular, it might be a good time to reflect a little on how we live out our faith. Christmas is, on the surface the easier part, with its lyrical carols and songs, jingling bells, lights and feasting, mistletoe and wine. Now the more challenging bit: the sombre mood change, where Holy Mother Church removes her resplendent crown. This, to be replaced with sackcloth and ashes, calling us to penitence in recognition of the necessity of Christ's shedding of his blood, deeply lovingly so, for our salvation.

At this time, we are challenged to ask ourselves how committed we are as we are called, with those preparing for baptism or confirmation, to meaningful reflection at Easter. We have recalled our own baptism in these moments of personal devotion, together with our whole community, as we determine to renew hearts and souls together. Ash on our foreheads, marking a season of sorrow within the overwhelming and infinite mercy of God, are now dissolved, as they are washed away in the new waters and in the Easter Light of Christ.

Our Passion Sunday liturgy in Deventer began with our meditating on the well known Christmas carol:

The holly and the ivy
When they are both full grown
Of all trees that are in the wood
The holly bears the crown

The holly bears a prickle
As sharp as any thorn
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
On Christmas Day in the morn

The holly bears a blossom
As white as lily flower
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
To be our dear Saviour

The holly bears a bark
As bitter as any gall
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
For to redeem us all

The holly bears a berry
As red as any blood
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
To do poor sinners good

(Chorus: O, the rising of the sun, And the running of the deer, The playing of the merry organ, Sweet singing in the choir.)

Thus, we were reminded that from Our Lord's birth to his Ascension, in his whole life and ministry, his purpose was one and the same. "Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ" that the universe, everything in heaven and on earth might be brought into unity with God through him in his Passion and Resurrection (see Ephesians 1:10, and Colossians 1:20).

Grace, peace, joyful Easter blessings, and love, as ever,

+Brian.