



## The Parish Churches of S Philip and S Augustine and S Matthew with S Mary the Virgin Newcastle

### Homily for the Easter Vigil (30<sup>th</sup> March) 2024

This evening's Liturgy is more than simply a celebration of the Resurrection: it is a presentation of life in the risen Christ, the life of those who are following the path to redemption and reconciliation with God.

So, in the first place, we kindle a light. By its quasi-eucharistic consecration, that light is more than some sort of representation of the Resurrection; it is in the strong sense a sign, containing in itself something of what it signifies. Its light shines over our assembly, just as the first Christian community coalesced in the glow of the Resurrection and the Church has ever since lived in that Light.

Some people like to fiddle around with the Liturgy by displacing the lighting of the Paschal Candle until after the Vigil readings, creating a sort of chronological scheme; but that is to miss the point; we hear and interpret those ancient texts in the Light of the Resurrection as we seek to understand all of life's experiences in the Light of the Resurrection.

When I have finished speaking here, we shall move to the Font and renew our Baptismal vows before celebrating the Mass at which one person will receive Holy Communion for the first time.

The Sacramental life of Initiation by water and the Spirit followed by admission to the Eucharistic Community, as it were, issued from Christ on the Cross as Blood and Water flowed from His pierced side. In different contexts, we refer to this Sacramental dimension sitting either as the pinnacle of Christian discipleship, at its centre or as its foundation.

However, whichever we choose, we need to understand that the Sacramental life does not stand on the winner's podium head and shoulders above other facets of Christian discipleship competing for the accolade of most important.

As I observed on Thursday evening, though in different words, a pinnacle or a centre or a foundation can only fulfil that function with the rest of the edifice with which they are integrally interwoven and on which they are mutually reliant. Inherently inseparable from the Sacramental Life, authentically lived, are the counsels and precepts of Christ's teaching.

Membership of the Eucharistic Community is, of course, the highest blessing, guiding us, as it does, along the path to Redemption; but it also carries with it responsibilities, as Saint Paul observes to the Church in Corinth, when he says that those who participate in the Eucharist unworthily achieve not the Salvation for which they yearn, but judgement.

However, the Liturgy this evening is orientated towards the positive, predicated on those who strive, falteringly of course, to embrace the Eucharistic identity in its fullness: to absorb the life and hope of the Resurrection and themselves become, as our patron puts it in His Gospel, a light of the world: a light that shines before others that they may see the good works and be drawn to give glory to their Father in Heaven.