

The Christian Community

Movement for Religious Renewal

Hollywood Congregation

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Newsletter for the week of Sunday, 11 April



*Lockdown for Easter
That was never going to work*

Dear friends,

I received this picture as an Easter greeting from a friend in France where they are again faced with severe restrictions so I thought I would share it with you as I thought it was rather good!

We can be very glad that things are going better for us here.

Due to the success of the current lockdown and the ongoing vaccination program we seem to be well on the way towards better times.

Our government appears to be very cautious in opening things up but I feel optimistic that we will gradually be able to go back to a more normal life together.

It was certainly great that we could sing again during our services for Holy Week and Easter and that some of us who have kept away for the past few months now feel safe to take part again.

In Holywood it was also very special to see some of our children again for their first service since Christmas.

We have started to plan for the confirmation which had to be postponed last year, this will now happen on Ascension Sunday, 16 May.

I am sorry that we didn't have enough space in Holywood for all those who wanted to come to the services on Good Friday and Easter Sunday, the distancing measures are likely to be with us for some time yet so we will have to continue with reduced numbers but with weekly services on Thursdays I hope that those of you who missed it can still get to an Easter service.

The Thursday service is also where we will start to share communion again as it is easier to move around the chapel whilst keeping our distance when we are fewer in number.

No-one should feel under any pressure either to come forward or to stay seated and accompany the process inwardly: this is a personal decision for each of us to take as individuals.

Our community room is also again open for study groups and other activities (up to 12 people).

But we will have to wait with having refreshments; maybe we start with those when the hospitality sector opens up.

Meanwhile, please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Ben van Lieshout

Hollywood

For the Sunday services please ring (02890424254), text (07974960570) or email (benvl@onetel.com) to book a place as we can only seat 11-13.

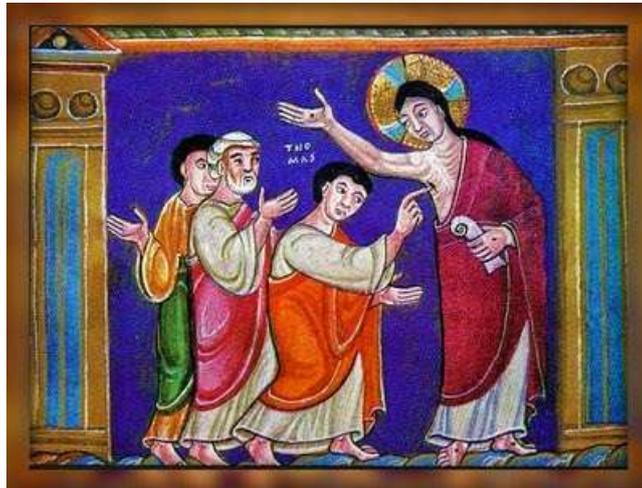
Easter

Thursday 8 th April	The Act of Consecration of Man	10.00
Thursday 15 th April	The Act of Consecration of Man	10.00

Mourne Grange (in Dawn Hall !)

Sunday 11 th April	The Act of Consecration of Man	10.15
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The gospel for Sunday 11 April is John 20: 19-29



On the evening of the first day after the Sabbath, the disciples were together with the doors locked for fear of the authorities. Jesus came and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you!"

And while he said this, he showed them his hands and his side.

Full of joy the disciples recognized the Lord. And again he said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you."

And when he said this, he breathed on them and said, "Receive Holy Spirit through which the world will receive healing. From now on you shall work in human destinies with spiritual power, so that they shall have the strength to wrest themselves free from the load of sin, and at the same time to bear the consequences of their offences."

Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not there with them when Jesus came. Later the disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord."

But he replied, "If I do not see in his hand the marks of the nails, and do not put my finger in the place where the nails were, and place my hand in his side, I cannot believe it."

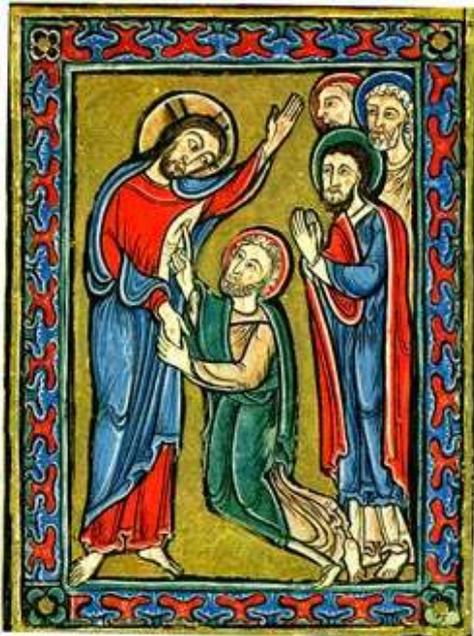
Eight days later, the disciples were again gathered in the inner room and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you."

Then he said to Thomas, "Stretch out your finger and see my hands, and stretch out your hand and put it into my side. Be not rigid in your heart, but rather feel and trust in my power in your heart."

Then Thomas said to him, "You are the Lord of my soul; you are the God whom I serve."

And Jesus said to him, "Have you found my power in yourself because you have seen me? Blessed are those who find my power in their hearts, even when their eye does not yet see me."

A homily for John 20: 19 – 29



A door presupposes a wall. The door frame, the threshold, is an opening in what is otherwise a barrier between one side and the other. But the door itself can be opened or closed, even locked. It is a metaphor for choice: Open? Closed? When locked it becomes like the wall itself – a barrier. The disciples had kept the doors lock for fear of the authorities. The locked doors were also metaphors for state of their hearts locked in fear. But Christ had said of Himself, "I AM the Door." He himself became the entrance to the locked room, to their closed hearts. He enters the room, enters them, bringing with him a deep atmosphere of peace.

And the disciples recognize and receive His healing spirit.

Eight days later he will show to Thomas other more intimate doorways. He will show him His own wounds, the doorways through which He was assaulted. He accepted them, suffered them, so that in His descent into hell, they too could be transformed into doorways of light. Light, warmth and life now radiate from His wounds, light that can germinate trust within human hearts, light for our path forward.

Easter, by Adam Bittleston

Unto the sorrowing heart of Mary Magdalene
Thou camest in the garden of fresh life
That seeks in flower and tree the sunlit air.

Unto the questioning head of Thomas Didymus
Thou camest in the quiet upper room
By barred doors sheltered from the city's hatred.

Unto the faltering will of Simon Peter
Thou camest on the lake shore where he laboured
As fisher with his brethren on the waters.

And so Thou comest to our sorrowing heart
Into the pure rhythms of the earth, sun, stars-
Linking our being's pulse to Paradise

And so Thou comest to our questioning head
Revealing how the slain and buried Good
Takes on new body from the Invisible

And so Thou comest to our faltering will,
Speaking to each of us our true name,
Calling us from our graves to work with Thee.