

Does it feel like we're having a happy easter? Maybe we're celebrating small joys at the moment. I really appreciated that our family made it to the dawn easter fire service this year. Dawn Easter services have been important to me in the past but this was the first time I've made it to a dawn service since Lucy was born, and even in the covid-safe version, I got a load out of being there. I possibly got even more out of the fact that the kids actually enjoyed the adventure of getting up in the dark to go to a church service with a bonfire.

But everything these days is through the lens of what's going on with the pandemic. It's better than last year; we're in church, or most of us are. Rules-wise it's better than last week. Swimming, self-contained overnight stays, outdoor hospitality and non essential shopping are all on again. I'm told that hairdressers are open again, but you'll notice I haven't managed to get to one myself yet. For those obsessing over daily infection rates, things seem to be going in a good direction. Or at least it was last time I edited this paragraph.

So do we feel like it's really Easter, and what does that mean? In our first reading, Peter presents this as a stark choice, between choosing the author of life and choosing the murderer Barabbas. Brilliant rhetoric, but is it the right rhetoric for 2021. We are sure we haven't chosen a murderer, but we don't feel the way we'd expect to feel after choosing the author of life, as our thoughts increasingly are of death. How many people have died this week? How many people we know have died in the last year? Too many. Far too many. We want to proclaim that we are witnesses to the author of life, but this year it feels harder than ever.

So I turn to our gospel reading, where we read about grilled fish. Maybe that'll speak to us more in these times. Food has been a big issue recently; exactly a year ago, 2 Sundays after last Easter, I preached a sermon that reflected on the shortages of food in our shops then. Even though the shelves are now full, there have been many food-related twists in the intervening year; for my family, we've been eating far more meals at home together, with school closures and less opportunities to eat out.

So why is our gospel reading going on about grilled fish? Because it's important to stress that Jesus's resurrection was a physical event; Jesus wasn't resurrected as some purely spiritual being but as a flesh and blood person who needed food and so on. Jesus, the author of life, is bringing life into the world, into this world. And that means that the life that Jesus promises in abundance isn't some abstract philosophical principle, but is fully involved in all the messiness of this world. We do not live by every word that comes from the mouth of God alone, but also by bread. And grilled fish or whatever else we have with our bread.

Remembering this, remembering that the resurrection is totally involved in the messiness of our real world, might help make dramatic phrases like 'the author of life' more real to us, connect them with our lives. And help us make sure we have rejected the murderer. When we talk about Jesus as the author of life, when we think of Jesus bringing us life, and in abundance, remember this is completely involved in the world, present in every spring flower you see blooming, present in the rain that sustains them and so on.

We could go on from this. Our gospel reading makes it very clear that it's really important that Jesus had a physical body after the resurrection, but too often Christians give the impression it's not terribly important they have physical bodies. Jesus, the author of life, is the author of our life, and since it's so vital that we appreciate the physicality of the

resurrection, it's vital that we appreciate that Christ's impact in our life is in the everyday practicality of our physical lives too.

This all might be similar to something I was going on about in January, at the start of the lockdown. Then the words I used were that God was to be found in the ordinary, and that lockdown is a time of greater ordinariness. Maybe today, reflect on how the way in which God is found in the ordinary because the author of life is actively the author of all life, in every place.

I suspect most of us are finding this a very tough time spiritually, finding it hard to find sustenance in it, finding hard to find meaning in all the events that are happening to us. That's certainly what I'm experiencing. I wonder whether we will discover how to make sense of it some time later, when we can look back on it, and maybe then we'll notice spiritual lessons in our experiences that we didn't see at the time. Of course, I don't know what those lessons are going to be, but I'm going to make a wild guess anyway. In these times, many of us have spent more time with our families, spent more time cooking more of our own food, spent more time outside noticing the rhythm of the seasons, spent more time consciously exercising and taking care of our bodies. So if we took time to think about it, we're doing the perfect things to better appreciate how the author of life is present in our world. If only we could manage to spend less time doing statistical analysis of the latest infection data, making sense of changes to various rules and all the other things that truly are stressing us out and making this time so tough.

And in the middle of this pandemic. in this tough time, Georgi is getting baptized today. Today he is choosing the author of life. We'll all be joining with him as he says he turns to Christ and renounces evil. As his life of faith starts the next chapter, hopefully he will continue to more deeply appreciate Christ the author of life in all ordinary moments, and in many extraordinary ones too. Georgi isn't going to magically become perfect today, isn't going to always confidently believe all that's in the Christian faith. But what he is doing is choosing to live his life alongside the author of life. And alongside us, the church, as the whole church accompanies him on this journey.

So I pray that as we go through the easter season, we can at least some times break away from the worries of covid and experience Christ as the author of life as we remember our physical life, as we appreciate the spring weather and as we enjoy food.