

Introduction

- How do you feel having got up early?
 - bleary eyed? tired? hassled by less time to get out?
 - *(why did we set the alarm so early again....?)*
 - excited? special? anticipation?
- I wonder what the women on their way to the tomb were feeling?
- I suspect a mixture of doubts and certainties, bewilderment and assurance!
- Sometimes Easter can be a time for easy certainties:
 - Jesus rose from the dead - Hallelujah! ... and everyone is expected to feel the triumph, the certainty, the joy that that brings.
- But sometimes, while we believe all that to be true, our feelings are a little more confused:
 - joy and fear, hope and dread, peace and stress.
 - joy, hope, peace in what Christ has done, in what our faith affirms;
 - fear, dread, stress in our experience of life each day.

Doubts

- For the women we meet in this passage, there was certainly the same confusion of emotion!
 - and there were a number of doubts that rose in their minds...
- General doubts and uncertainties:
 - is it all over? No more Jesus? No more teaching, healings...?
- Specific difficulties:
 - the stone! Who will move it? They saw it being put in place...
- Bewilderment and uncertainty when God breaks in:
 - can you not feel the bewilderment, the uncertainty as the women flee from the tomb with the angels words in their ears?
 - were those really angels? Am I losing it? Am I delusional?
- Passage ends with them running off scared.
- Observant among you will note footnote about the final verses of the chapter - maybe we don't have the full ending that Mark intended!
- Likely that in his original account he would have told how they didn't tell anyone as they ran, but burst into the disciples with the news - garbled (maybe that's why Luke's account says the disciples didn't believe them, for their words seemed like nonsense!).
- But we are left with their uncertainty!

Certainties

- However, underlying all their doubts is one resounding certainty:
 - they had come to love Jesus with all their hearts, to trust him and follow him, to want to honour him with all of their lives;
 - these were the ones who had stayed by Jesus right to the end;
 - these were the faithful background supporters!
- And so they had come to the tomb to do what they could for their Lord.
- That certainty of relationship/love for Jesus brought them to the point where another, new certainty could start to take root:
 - the certainty of Jesus' new life;
 - the certainty of all that would bring to them;
 - the new certainty on which they would build their lives!
- They were there - they maybe didn't understand fully, or even believe fully as they fled from the tomb.
 - but the seed was sown from which new life would grow, new depth of relationship with Jesus not just as Rabbi but as Lord!

Conclusion

- Maybe we sometimes feel uncertain: of how to live for Christ, of how to cope with all that gets thrown our way.
 - come to Christ, as the women did - and discover there the starting point for renewed and growing certainty, hope ...
 - come to him, hearing the "Hallelujah's", the cries of "He is risen!", and knowing that however we feel, that new life is the reality he desires to bring to us.
- **Hope out of darkness and despair, new life out of pain and doubt!**
- And that's exactly what communion is all about, which we'll share together in a moment!
 - new life - from death;
 - certainty born in doubt;
 - hope from fear.