

Not so very long ago I had to call at the sorting office in Baldoyle. The postman had called at the Rectory to deliver a parcel and there was no one at home. He left a note telling me to call at the sorting office to collect it myself. When I went there to ask for the item I was asked, “Do you have any photo identification?” The man at the counter wanted to know who I was; he wanted to be sure that I was not trying to get hold of a parcel that wasn’t mine.

That set me thinking about ways in which we can be identified. There is of course the photo in my passport that I showed to the man behind the counter. But there are lots of other ways in which we can be identified. People will recognise our voice or even the sound of our footsteps along the corridor. Then of course there are more precise ways this can be done. There are those collections of lines and whirls on the end of my fingers, my fingerprint that is unique to me. There is my DNA, that complicated molecule in every cell of my body that is again unique to me – that determines the colour of my eyes, my hair, my skin, what height I am going to grow to along with many other characteristics that we are only now beginning to understand.

All of these, my photo, the colour of my eyes and hair, the sound of my voice, my fingertips, my DNA, they all prove that this is Kevin Brew standing in front of you and not some imposter pretending to be me. But do these tell me who I am, what sort of person I am, what are my values, what are my priorities in life. Of course they don’t. You would need to get to know me, to see how I behave, how I think.

This morning in our Gospel passage, Luke tells us of Jesus appearing to his disciples after the resurrection. They were in the upper room. Now they had

seen that the tomb was empty. Some of the women had told them that they had seen angels at the tomb telling them he was alive, Mary Magdalene had even said that she had seen them. They were confused and worried, wondering what to do next.

He showed them his hands and his feet - marks of his identity. They see these and we are told that they knew who he was; their beloved Master who was crucified, the one they had felt powerless to help. He was the one they had followed; they had heard him teach, seen him heal, seen him do remarkable things. But these marks on his hands and his feet do more than just confirm his identity. Those marks are signs of love, self emptying, self forgetting love – in which nothing is held back, embodying in his own person the statement ‘God is love’; they put flesh on the declaration, ‘God so loved the world that he gave’

And he says to this startled group of men and women, ‘Peace be with you.’ Peace to men and women whose lives had been turned upside down, to those who knew their weakness and failure. But when he says ‘Peace be with you’ he is saying a lot more than just peace in the privacy of your own heart, a sort of cosy peace that they can keep to themselves. This is a peace that will enable to move out from this room in which they had been hiding themselves; move out not in fear but in confidence.

He goes on to say. ‘You will be my witnesses.’ Witnesses are those who not only see and hear but those who are prepared to share what they have seen and heard. This group are to go out from that room in which they had been hiding and speak boldly of Jesus as risen and crucified. In a short period of time the

message they proclaim will spread right across the whole Roman Empire. For many, like Peter, their witness will cost them their lives.

Our Baptism reminds us that we are called to be witnesses in our own generation of the risen Christ. At the end of a service of Baptism I will say to the child:

You have received the light of Christ.

Walk in this light all the days of your life.

**Shine as a light in the world
to the glory of God the Father.**

That is what we are called to do, to shine as a light in this world, in our homes, in our schools and places of work. As a community and as individuals to be living signs of reconciliation in the places of discord, of integrity and truth in the face of falsehood, of love in the places of hate, of hope in places of fear., to be Christ in the world of today.

When we go out from this place, we take in the words of the post communion prayer, “ourselves, our souls and bodies to be a living sacrifice. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory.” We go out as witnesses, as ones who have been with the Lord, as ones who serve the Lord.

Our service will be imperfect, our witness will at times be flawed but God has a strange way of using the imperfect and the flawed to shine something of the light of his love, to reveal something of his Christ in this broken and imperfect world. May God take us and use us this week, may we be his light in the world of today.