

## **Bishop Gregor's Easter Message 2018**

Some of you may listen to a Radio 4 programme called *Last Word*. In effect it offers appreciations and assessments of interesting people who have died in the week or so before the programme is broadcast. As I write, the cast includes Stephen Hawking and Ken Dodd. But it occurs to me that it's an odd title for a programme which makes no claim that what is said is to be understood as either authoritative or the last word about anybody.

Odd, simply because we all know that whoever claims to have the last word about anyone or anything is claiming to have very significant power over people or in human affairs generally. And we are all too aware of the destructive potential of such claims in the world as we experience it. But what if the last word need not be like that and what if we are about to celebrate the all-important Last Word, namely the divine exercise of power which raised Jesus from the dead? And what if this Last Word turns out to be the very opposite of a destructive exercise of power, but is heard rather as a word of love, a word of life, a word of vindication, a word of triumph over the worst that we humans can perpetrate, because it is uttered by no human claimant to power? And if that is true, *and it is our faith that it is true*, then here is a *Last Word* which constantly constitutes our hope and our ground for trying to live what we might call Christ-shaped lives, lives that may seem to meet with little favour in a hard and unforgiving world, but lives that bear the glory of resurrection now and at the end. I suggest that at its best the liturgy of Easter celebrates this hope and strengthens us in living it out. I wish you all a blessed Easter.

+Gregor