

## A DAY OF CONTRASTS

→ So, you've had the opportunity to look closely at some chocolate eggs this morning and even taste them – always a good thing - and think about the contrast between the hollow eggs and the filled eggs. Well now, just for a very short while, I want us to go back to the story that Alison told and the rest of the story that we can find in the Bible about that first Easter morning, and think about one or two other contrasts that we can find in that story.

.....I wonder if you can remember what time of day it was when the women went to the tomb on Easter Day? Yes, it was very early in the morning so it would have been dark and it would also have been really dark inside the tomb for those who had a look inside. But in contrast to that, you may remember that when Mary waited at the tomb some people appeared beside her. Who were they? And what were they wearing? Yes, that's right – it was some angels and they wore white, gleaming clothes. So we have the contrast of the darkness as the friends of Jesus went to the tomb, to the brightness of the angels who were trying to help Mary understand what had happened.

.....Then, you remember that when Mary got to the tomb, she saw that the stone was rolled away. All the way there, she and her friends had been worrying about how they were going to move the stone, but how do you think she felt when she saw that? Yes, frightened, maybe shaking a little, worried about where Jesus' body had gone, not sure what to do next, quite sad because her friend had died! But then later, after she had seen the angels, and Jesus himself had spoken to her, she realised that Jesus was alive again. How did she feel then? Pleased, happy, excited – yes, very different from how she had felt just a little while before when she was running to the tomb. What a contrast!

.....Then there are the different ways in which the people who arrived at the tomb that morning reacted to what they saw. Peter ran into the empty tomb and was completely confused by what he saw. John went in, saw the graveclothes and remembering what Jesus had said, believed that he had risen from the dead. But Mary hung around at the tomb for a while and had everything absolutely confirmed because she got chance to see Jesus himself.

→ There will be other differences and contrasts to be found too in that story if we look hard enough and you may like to spend some time when you get home talking about that in your families, but there are also contrasts to be found in our everyday lives as well aren't there? How have you all been feeling whilst you've been on your Easter holidays? Happy, glad not to have to get up too early in the mornings, pleased to be able to choose what you do during each day. And how will you feel when you go to bed on Monday evening? Mmm, a little sad because you know that you'll be up the next morning and heading back to school!

.....How many of you gave something up for Lent? Has it been easy or difficult? How has it made you feel? Mmm – a bit tough, felt like giving up sometimes, desperate for a bit of chocolate. And how has it made you feel now that Easter Day is here? Happy to be going back to those treats, or perhaps in some cases, really pleased with the difference that cutting some things out of your life have made you

feel! So much so that it's going to make a lasting difference to what you do in the future!

→ As we journey through life, we discover that actually it is full of contrasting experiences through which we will have contrasting feelings. But there is one thing that can be a constant throughout all of that for us and that is the presence of Jesus himself. It was the presence of the risen Jesus that completely changed how Mary felt that morning. It was the presence of the risen Jesus that eventually completely changed how all the disciples felt and behaved. And the presence of the risen Jesus can completely change how we see, experience and feel about life too!

.....The fact that Jesus is alive means that our fear can be replaced with peace, our sadness can be turned into joy, our despair can be transformed into hope, our feelings of dislike and hatred can be replaced with love and death itself can be replaced with life eternal. Mary didn't recognise Jesus at first when he stood next to her but once she heard him speak her name, she knew it was him and that he was alive. May all of us, this Easter Day, know the joy of being known by God by name and may we like Mary, run to share that good news with others who really need to hear it and know the difference that knowing Jesus can bring into their lives.