“Who Moved The Stone?” Frank Morison asked in his 1975 book of that title. Matthew had already told us that it was angel who rolled it away. Morison’s book looked into different accounts as to what happened between Holy Saturday and Easter Dawn. Reactions to the book showed that both Christians and non-Christians alike wanted answers. We continue to look for answers in 2023. We are still looking to know what the Resurrection means.

Believers have doubts and difficulties with the Easter Story, even as some non-believers struggle against its magnetic attraction. If the proof of the pudding is in the eating, we have some inward digestions to do when it comes to the paschal feast. We need to chose the correct exegetical cutlery. Our banquet of rich fare will require seasoning to suit individual palates. But first, we need to collect together the ingredients for the recipe.

But we immediately hit a snag, before we have even started. You cannot have a recipe with a hole in the middle where the key ingredient is missing. But a hole is exactly what our faith is set in: a space where a body should have been.

Only Matthew tells us that an angel rolled away the stone; probably to emphasise that the no one cheated by secretly removing the body. And that seems to be why he records Pilate posting a company of soldiers to guard the tomb.

Our lives are full of things we rely on but don’t understand. Aside from missing key ingredients in recipes, black holes are a source of endless fascination and study by scientists and physicists. Indeed, and conveniently for my talk this morning, In yesterday’s paper I read an article about how a black hole with a mass 20 million times that of our sun is hurtling through space at a million miles an hour, after being ejected from its galaxy, creating a long trail of new-born stars in its wake. Described as a “runaway monster black hole” the object was discovered by chance using the Hubble telescope.

Well, on this Easter Sunday morning I can think of another instance where we find a group of people gazing into a dark hole and trying to make sense of it. They were peering into an empty tomb. They couldn’t be sure what had happened but within hours they began piecing together the evidence and stretching human language to breaking point in the process. As the different pieces of the jigsaw came together, they came to the extraordinary conclusion that God had raised the crucified Jesus from the dead.

• Each of the four gospels recount the events of Easter slightly differently which is exactly what you would expect coming from independent witnesses.

• We learn from one of the evangelists that the Roman authorities were so determined to squash the Jesus movement that they posted guards at the tomb to deter body snatchers. Yet the body was gone.

• All of the gospel writers tell us that the only things left in the empty tomb were the grave clothes, lying exactly as if the body had been removed from them.

• Various people, independently, begin to claim with breathless excitement that they had seen Jesus alive and that he bears the scars of crucifixion on his hands, feet and side.

St John, whose account we heard this morning, gives us a very particular slant in his account. He tells us that the resurrection took place ‘on the first day’ of the week while it was still dark. John is the only gospel to tell us that when Mary Magdalene sees the risen Christ as dawn breaks she thinks he is a gardener. His appearance has indeed changed, but the voice was the same. The resurrection speaks of a new form of life: there is continuity, but above all transformation.

For any Jewish person, steeped in the scriptures, John’s description would have resonated with the story of creation as told in the opening chapters of Genesis which starts with the first day when ‘darkness covered the face of the earth’ and God says ‘Let there be light’. It is in Genesis that we encounter another gardener – Adam, who is placed in the Garden of Eden to tend it.

John is telling us that in Christ there is a new creation. Here indeed is the second Adam, inviting us to be transformed and to share in his risen life. That is the message and hope of Easter that extends to every generation.

Small wonder that within a few days the small scattered band of disciples who had fled the scene of Jesus’s execution in terror are now standing on the street corners in Jerusalem in full view of the Roman and Jewish authorities, preaching with confidence that God had raised Jesus from the dead.

Today, 2000 years later, there are 2.3 billion people in the world who are proud to call themselves Jesus’s followers. The risen Christ has a bigger following than anyone on Twitter. And it is why we gather here on this Easter Day in celebration.

Like the theoretical physicists puzzling over the black holes in the universe, we Christians are still trying to make complete sense of the event of the resurrection - what we observe and experience - and the God who summons to glory. Like the scientists, what we see and marvel at is the effect that the risen Christ has on people and situations. Christ scatters the darkness and suffuses everything with light. And it is that invitation to personal transformation that he extends to you and me.

So let alleluia be our song today.

The Lord is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia.