If I may say so, you all look amazing, in a great range of outfits, to celebrate Easter Day.

But what was Jesus wearing when Mary Magdalen met him on Easter Day?

There is no reference to his clothes at all in the gospels. This is interesting because clothes are mentioned in some detail in the accounts of the resurrection. Matthew and Luke describe angelic presence in dazzling clothes, like lightening. Mark is more measured and says the women at the tomb “saw a young man dressed in a white robe”.

These references remind us of the story of the transfiguration when Jesus is seen in dazzling white clothes. But in the resurrection accounts, the reference to clothing connected with Jesus points us firmly to the grave clothes inside the tomb.

The old clothes do not belong to the resurrection. So what was the Lord wearing?

In artistic tradition, the Lord is generally dressed as he always used to be. Our Graham Sutherland rather nicely gives him a sun hat to help out with the mistake about the gardener. Titian’s famous version in the London gallery suggests that something like a sheet has been hastily tied round the otherwise naked figure of the risen Christ, though only Michelangelo boldly went for full nudity in his powerful but controversial sculpture in Sta Maria sopra Minerva in Rome, moderated by a 19th century attack of health and safety type scruples which has supplied a bronze loincloth.

Recognition of the risen person of Christ by the disciples does not occur because he was wearing the same clothes that they had seen him wearing on Thursday. Recognition is by voice and action. He knows Mary’s name and she recognises the way he addresses her. At Emmaus the disciples recognise him because of the distinctive way in which he breaks the bread. More spectacularly, the apostles gathered in the upper room recognise him because they see the wounds on his hands and his side.

This is the key to the mystery of the resurrection; it is the same body. It’s not about the same clothes: it’s the same body. Flesh, in all its human dimension, is embodiment, the physical appearance of a person we know, we love, or we fear; the capacity to read a person’s face, to recognise their walk, to understand the way they gesture with their hands, to know they way they sound – these are all part of what it means to be bodily people.

And although art supplies us almost exclusively with images of the risen Christ that give him clothes, the theological fact is that Michelangelo is closer to the truth. There is something scandalous about the unclothed risen Christ because the risen body is so immediately similar to each and every one of us when we rest in death.

In the resurrection, it is your body and mine that Jesus presents to us. And although artists have done us proud by the way they have presented the risen Lord, they have softened the shock of his likeness to us in this one point that we all have in common by giving him clothes that tie him to a convention of art or fashion

For all our differences of gender, race, class, height, weight or belief, this bodily form is what equalises us as human beings in its mortality and the possibility of its glorification in heaven. Glorification does not mean a designer body, it means being the perfect reflection of God our creator, it means compete contentment in being yourself, and it also means delight in the glory that is another person.

Now all of this might seem a long way from anything that really matters in what people call the real world - just a whimsical sweep across scripture and the arts, as a mild distraction from the Mozart that will follow, the roast lamb for lunch, and a new school term that starts on Tuesday. But there is much more substance than that in this provocative and stubborn truth about the risen body of Jesus Christ.

We are always more than the sum of our functions. We have the capacity for imagination and compassion, and we become fully human through relationships, their successes and their failures.

Writing in 2011 about the big society and our small world, Rowan Williams offered some thoughtful insights on the capacity for compassion and emotional intelligence as something that lifts us from being individuals living under the regulation of external laws, to being people with a bigger experience of belonging to each other in some purposeful way.

Williams wrote that “without an education of the emotions (which means among other things the nurture of empathy), public or political life becomes simply a matter of managing the competition of egos with limited capacity to question themselves”.

This celebration of Easter has provided us with a welcome lull in the turbulence of political process that is trying to fathom the complexities of our future relationship with the EU. Whatever you might think about the Prime Minister, she has been magnificent in her tenacity and forbearance.

But as we look to the future, what also emerges is the need for us to become more emotionally intelligent in how we live together, make decisions for the common good of all people in this land, and build our confidence in a more expansive horizon for our best and noble ambitions.

A couple of weeks ago I was on a pastoral visit in Crawley. I spent the morning learning about the work of Christian projects there that are meeting the intense and diverse needs of that fascinating town.

One of the most remarkable people I met was an older guy who was a volunteer in the Bridge café. Here was someone with a violent criminal past fuelled by a self-destructive drug habit. The openness, stability and sheer professionalism of Christian volunteers working in rehabilitation projects had brought about an amazing transformation in his life.

His body still bore the signs of his past; but the development of his spiritual and emotional intelligence had changed him out of all recognition. As he took my order for a mug of tea, white no sugar, and a hot cross bun, I caught a look of extraordinary tenderness in his eye. Waiting at table was his joy and his pride. It was close to the ministry of Jesus Christ, whom he was seeking, late in his life, to love, to know and to follow. And here was a table at which all were welcome: prostitutes and tax collectors – fraudulent like Zaccheus, or otherwise, together with the servants of the living God who were seeking to live a righteous life and to nurture its hope and joy in others.

This man seemed to me to represent the kind of society we need to be building. One in which we have a greater understanding of ourselves in our commonality. What he showed me of himself was imitating what the risen body of Jesus teaches us in today’s celebration of the paschal mystery of death and resurrection.

It isn’t the clothes we wear, it’s the emotional intelligence we exhibit in our treatment of each other that will make us happier, better, and more attractive, and can ultimately lead us to heaven, to perfection, to beauty in all the glory of eternal bliss.

When I say, “You look amazing”, that’s really what I have in mind, and when we say, “Happy Easter”, it is the realisation of that home that we are trying to express.

Happy Easter. Alleluia: the Lord is risen! *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*