

Easter - Living in the Resurrection Now!



As Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James and Salome approach the tomb of Jesus they are quite naturally preoccupied with death. They are intent on doing a very loving and caring thing, to anoint the body of the dead Jesus with spices, which will take away the smell of the decomposing body. The three women are of one mind, such is their love and devotion for Jesus who has so impacted upon their lives that they cannot tolerate the thought of his body being allowed to go untended in death.

So, they approach the tomb. In itself, this is a brave thing to do. The crucifixion was a highly politicised event involving Pilate, the Roman Governor, and the Jewish Temple Authorities. Both had a say in the fateful outcome. Going to the tomb was to risk exposure and the possibility of an adverse reaction from others. Still, this was not at the forefront of the women's minds, or at least there is no mention in the Gospel text. The focus is to do what one can, as an act of loving kindness, borne out of the strongest sense of loyalty, for a friend who has been brutally murdered. After all Pilate himself had declared, "This man has no case to answer."

What greets the women on arrival at the tomb is unexpected. Mark's Gospel tells us, that a figure in white, angel-like, announces that Jesus has been raised

from the dead. The tomb, the home of death and putrefying flesh has now become the place where new life and hope are born. The women flee the tomb and rush to tell Peter what they have seen, still trying to comprehend what the resurrection means and will mean, for future generations of believing Christians.

To stare into the tomb and expect to see death is a common part of our own human experience. Here are but two examples from the world stage. I was shocked and even distressed to read that the Taliban government in Afghanistan is to reintroduce the stoning of women accused of committing adultery. Given the culture in Afghanistan, in which women are so poorly viewed, every woman in that land must now be terrified at the prospect of being put at such risk. It is but one example in these past few days in which 'death' has been given status above life. The appalling tragedy of Gaza and the plight of innocent Palestinians, not least children, who find themselves by an accident of history, living in the wrong place at the wrong time, is but another example in which death is being allowed to triumph over life.

The crucifixion of Our Lord on Good Friday gives way to Resurrection on Easter Morning. This is our faith. This is the living tradition of our faith. We believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and we believe that we are called to live within this resurrection life in the here and now, recognising that within the human family, whatever our race, gender or sexual orientation, whether we are able-bodied or disabled, we are all children of God and that God calls us to the fullness of life, wants all of us to live life fully. This is the joy of our faith. With the risen Jesus we can call God our Father and in doing so recognise our neighbour not just as friend but as brother and sister. Easter is the great celebration of the inclusivity of life to which God calls us. This faith we celebrate is a faith that is alive, very much alive, not dead.

In our baptism vows and in the creed we recite, we affirm our belief that life is stronger than death and that wherever death – the taking away of God-given life in all its fullness, the exploitation of the powerful of the powerless, of life being discriminated against and put down, such 'death' must be called out and condemned.

Mary Magdalene takes her courage into her hands, and she ventures into the tomb – the place of death. Our Christian faith motivates us to do the same. Difficult and intractable ‘deathly’ problems, and I’ve listed but two and there are so many more, are not no-go areas when we know that such places need the transformation of God’s love. Our faith demands that we, in the trying times in which we live, stand up for life whenever and wherever death is being seen to triumph. We hold in our hearts and our prayers the women of Afghanistan and the innocent victims of war in Gaza.

Together, within the embrace of God’s love, we raise our voices and sing with our hearts, ‘This is our faith, our living faith.’ Alleluia Christ is risen. He is risen indeed.

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