

## TRIUMPH OF THE RESURRECTION

“Our Lord has written the promises of Resurrection, not in books alone,  
But in every leaf in Springtime”. (Martin Luther)

Easter is the one occasion in the year when, world-wide, many Christians gather to contemplate the death of Jesus on the Cross. The statement ‘God died on a Cross’ is a powerful one. We believe that Jesus died. We believe that Jesus is God. We believe that God’s death is a mystery, full of depth and totally beyond our human comprehension.

Jesus came to us in his passion as the Suffering Servant as depicted in Isaiah. He came to be despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. It is as if we live our lives in the shadow of Good Friday forgetting that the Resurrection will follow.

Asking ourselves why do we call Good Friday ‘good’ is a profound question. How can we explain Jesus’ passion, death and Resurrection? Why did Jesus have to suffer and die for our sins? Why didn’t he just come to earth and say, “I love and forgive you and you can all just come and make your home in heaven with me when you die?” How did he feel as he agonized in Gethsemane, alone in his suffering? How did he feel, believing he had suffered in vain at the hands of those who despised him? Did he feel he had failed in his mission? Why was he hated by so many whom he loved and wanted only to save? Jesus’ answer was simple – the world was in chaos and someone had to pay!

Theologians teach us about *Messianic* necessity – why Christ had to suffer. His apostles found it hard to understand and it is even harder for us. And why is there still so much suffering and pain in the world today? Again, it is the same basic law of human necessity – there has to be suffering, because of sin.

That is why, each Easter, we strive to contemplate anew the familiar account of the passion and death of Jesus who died the kind of death he did – naked, humiliated, deserted, a seeming failure and in agony. How he suffered rejection by his own people and by those he came to save. This is the absurdity of it all – an aspect of suffering we often find too difficult to comprehend. And he suffered all this alone. Yet, in so far as we can unite ourselves to him, we unite ourselves to his death. There can be no Resurrection without his passion and death.

The story of Jesus’ passion is not an attempt to answer the question ‘Why do people have to suffer?’ It does, however, proclaim a fundamental truth. Jesus did not come to prevent human suffering, but rather to consume it with his presence. Over the centuries it is the Cross on Calvary that has changed the moral landscape of the world. The mystery of the Cross is Jesus’ final act of love – it encompasses all his actions throughout his life – his touch of a leper, his tenderness towards the sick and bereaved, his tears at Lazarus’ grave in which we see the deeply compassionate Jesus at work and so much more.

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This time last year it was almost impossible to talk about anything other than the coronavirus and the chaos that had enveloped our world. The fact that Easter was just around the corner seemed like a mere afterthought! It is highly improbable for us to imagine the thought that in another 2,000 years people would still be talking about the coronavirus. And yet, here we are in the twenty-first century, and still talking about the significance of the passion, death and Resurrection of Jesus!

The story of Easter is the revelation of God's wonderful window of divine surprises. It offers to all people freedom from their burdens, guilt and inner turmoil. It promises liberation, hope and new beginnings. Easter Sunday fills Christians with the realization we are not living our lives in vain. It assures us there is life beyond our earthly lives.

Human death attempts to extinguish the light of hope within us. The Resurrection of Jesus offers us an eternal and hopeful perspective of death.

Our world needs Easter. We need it more than we possibly realize. We need to be reminded that Good Friday is not the end. The image of the glorified Cross and Jesus nailed to it is of supreme importance to all Christians. It is the way we celebrate our baptism. It is what we celebrate in the Eucharist. It is the cornerstone of our being. It is the living Paschal Mystery. And ultimately, it is the triumph of the Resurrection.

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