

Holy Thursday – Washing of Feet



At Passover, Jesus awoke with a deep foreboding. Still, there was much to be done in preparation for the feast – the room arranged, food prepared, friends gathered in this spring clean of the heart, a family time of blessing and remembering with children asking questions.

He thought of what he could say. Maybe a quick recap of the journey so far might be helpful: ‘blessed are the meek for they shall inherit’ or ...

The inspiration must have come to him as it were from ‘on high’ for that evening at the table he stood up and tying a towel around his waist, took a basin of water, bent down and began to wash their feet.

Disbelief, hesitation, unease – ‘what’s all this?’ ‘You’re not a servant’. And Peter’s protest, ‘You’ll not wash my feet’. Without surrender, he was saying, you can have no part in me.

But what did it mean? It was clear that he loved them and wanted them to love one another. But something else was clarified: that in his action, his Father, too, was on his knees, his hands in the basin – ‘to have seen me is to have seen the Father’.

It was then he took the unleavened bread, said the blessing, broke it and gave it to them, saying ‘take and eat; this is my body’. And with the wine, ‘drink, this is my blood poured out for you’. In time they would understand a little more, have further questions.

Good Friday – The Crucifixion

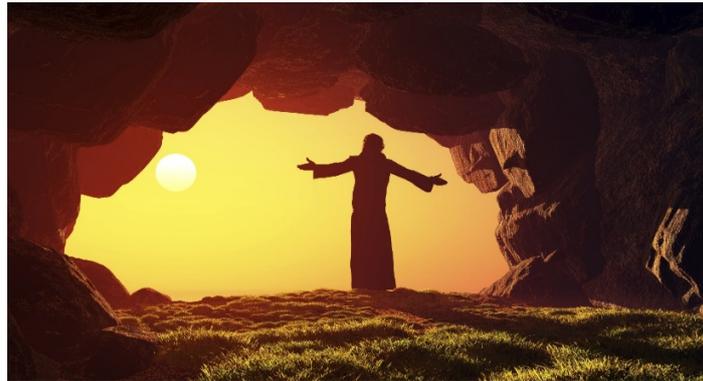


The women gather, the women draw back; on the street corner, by the gate, in the shadow. They are passing it on – news about the lines of grief to be found on an ordinary Friday with its multiple goodbyes and memories of the rites of passage from womb to air, sound to sense, first steps to last. He was on the path even now because it was that time, hauling the unmade bed of a tree on his back. Women approached with a sigh, a look, a lullaby, a wet towel for his face. Tears hardly touched the point of it all, now that all flesh was bowed down, bludgeoned, bound, spat upon.

But like an arm struggling out of a bad dream and reaching for the light, another arm is raised to deliver the wrist-shattering blow. The logic of the institution runs: 'it is better to have someone die for the people', like the boy who goes out waving a flag after curfew, or this one high up on faulty scaffolding, searching for a breath, for a sign, and finding none. Nothing more to be done than to hand it over – 'into your hands' – only to find that the Father's hands are tied, shot through with the same nail, 'the Father and I are one'.

The curious disperse, a soldier takes a swig from a bottle and wipes his mouth with the back of his hand. Time sheds its skin.

Easter Sunday – The Resurrection



'Remember how he told you'

Remember, Easter invites to 'remember how he told you'.

After Good Friday, there is a pause and a stillness as the extent of the loss sinks in. TS Eliot speaking in his *Four Quartets* says: 'Wait without hope, for hope would be hope for the wrong thing'. The not knowing what to hope for was very much the experience of the disciples on that morning. They had been so confident until the events of the previous week. There was no rushing towards Easter Sunday, but on that dawn there was a reminder of a different reality for the disciples. They began to remember that this is what Jesus had told them. Good Friday will not be the end – Jesus is Risen. Remembering his life, his words and the experience of being in his presence enabled the women to cope with their fear and to bring the message of his Resurrection to the others. This is Easter. When we remember, we find reminders that Easter surrounds us in every circumstance of life.

Easter does not change our reality, but it is an invitation to awareness of another kind of reality and way of living. Every aspect of human living is a gift and also a responsibility, a promise and an uncertainty. Life experiences can rock us back and forth between total trust and the deepest despair. We live between the threshold of faith and doubt, between joy and sadness. The invitation of Easter is to remember that Jesus is Risen in each of those experiences.

In birth and in new life, Jesus is Risen

When the night is dark, we know the dawn will bring the morning, Jesus is Risen

In our world so full of suffering, the people of hope, who reach out and give time and energy to ease the pain they see, Jesus is Risen.

In a time of grief when a wave of loss surrounds us and then there comes a moment of peace, Jesus is Risen

When there is forgiveness in the face of hurt and disappointment, Jesus is Risen

These Easter days are a time to remember all that 'He has told us' in our own life stories.