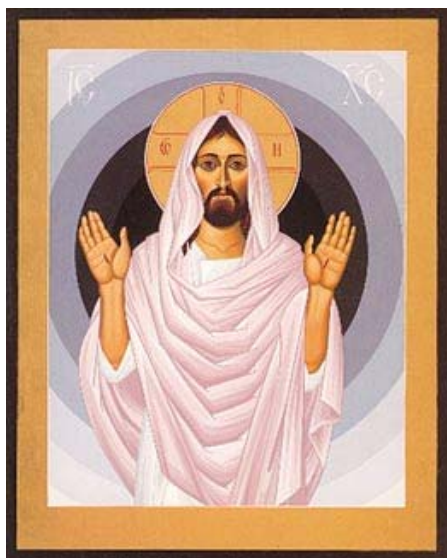


An Easter Alleluia!

Christ is risen! He is truly risen! The joy of Christ's resurrection renews the whole world! By our Easter faith, by the grace of Christ given through the waters of Baptism and the bread and wine of the Eucharist we are set free from the chains of death and sin, resentment and fear to life and grace, reconciliation and love. And so, grateful jubilation makes "Alleluia!" our identifying song as Christians.

In asking myself what does the resurrection mean to me this year I have been moved to ponder the necessary link between cross and resurrection. Jesus died as a victim of the powers of domination who rule the world through violence. The same spirit that inspired his persecutors is still at work in our world today using war and violence to protect security and freedom while at the same time creating



new victims. Through our Good Friday remembrance and communion we are united in the blood of Christ with the victims of the world. Yet all too often we share the world view, the comfort and safety of the victors rather than the bread of the afflicted. We feel safer with walls of exclusion rather than a door open to welcome the stranger, the refugee and those in need. We fear the chaos and dark night of what might happen if we lose control.

The resurrection was first preached in Jerusalem to those with blood on the hands for the death of Jesus. It was an invitation to the guilty to turn to their victim and to see in him their hope of salvation. The Resurrection of Jesus is a rich, many layered symbol for me. It is a symbol of hope in God's will that nothing be lost, that the powers of darkness never have the final word and that in Christ we have salvation and eternal life for us. But it is

also a symbol of conversion from the ways of fear, domination and exclusion to love, reconciliation and communion of life.

Sadly too often our lives are shaped by the way of the powers of this world with their reliance on domination and exclusion to save us from our fears rather than on the grace of our crucified and risen Lord. Jesus lived and proclaimed a way of trust, vulnerability in love and non-violence that brings those who believe to live in the holiness, truth and freedom of God. He suffered, entered into the chaos and darkness of being a victim and broke through into, not death, but eternal life vindicated by God.

The death and resurrection of Christ challenges us to conversion to life in Christ, to renounce that living by appearances which masks the often subtle violence and exclusion in our own families and communities (including religious communities). We want to seem to others to be the people we would like to be—successful and in control of our lives. There is the tension of acting out an ideal we can never actually live. We have the pride and glory of the ideal but also the shame of our reality which always falls short of perfection.

So we cannot be our true selves, we cannot be vulnerable and truly enter into any relationship involving mutuality (including especially our relationship with God, in prayer). What we think of as Gospel witness becomes a means of control—cold, brittle, sterile and hypocritical. The resurrection invites us on the other hand to trust, let go and live the truth of who we are, to allow ourselves to be loved by God and to receive his merciful forgiveness and new life. We need to acknowledge that like Saint Thérèse we too may not be perfect but we are loved. Our deepest reality is that we are each God's beloved. We are invited to die to our false self seeking control in order to rise to our real self able to love others as they are. In living this we learn to empathise with others and to love, not in dreams, but warmly realistically, creatively in the reality of our lives.

The resurrection is also Good News for those who see themselves as victims. The crucified and risen Lord invites us to let go our resentments and to allow ourselves to be healed. When we become fixed in blaming others for what they have done to hurt us we cannot allow our wounds to be healed. The temptation is to scapegoat the one who has hurt us and to desire payback. We hope they be removed from our lives and our community. We need to know why we feel this way, to own our feelings and respond to situations creatively rather than merely react. In this way we can hear the invitation of the Lord to share his risen life and to re-awaken love and new life. This new life is relational—it is new life for us and the one who has wronged us. The risen Lord invites us to rise with him and to know ourselves not as victims but his beloved children called to love and be loved.

In line with these reflections there are three things that authenticate our living of the Easter faith and our contemplative prayer. St Teresa tells us they are mutual love, freedom and humility. When writing of her vision of our life together Teresa wanted a community of equals. Here “all must be friends, all must be loved, all must be held dear, all must be helped” (Way of Perfection, 4.7). Teresa had a great regard for the needs of individuals and the “holy freedom” that is needed if people are to grow (ibid. 5.2) and find their joy in God, free of any attachment. Teresa finally recommends that walking in the truth of who we are. This she called true humility (ibid.4.4). As I get older the words of T.S. Eliot in *East Coker* strike me more and more:

The only wisdom we can hope to acquire
Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless.

This style of community living is not one of intense pressure and relentless will-power. It is not one of domination with winners and losers, victors and victims. This community is one of friends, finding their destiny is being the people the Lord intends them to be, living together in communion with God and one another and all creation in very real peace and joy.

And there we have it: *community life in the spirit of the resurrection*. For Teresa this way of life was not simply for individuals but for her community, for the whole church and the entire world. She wanted a Church that had renounced the fear and violence of the Inquisition (Way 3.1) and had been lead by the Spirit to a patient, hospitable and loving way of being and proclaiming the Gospel- through the attractive power of the friendship of those who truly loved God and one another. It is a vision of a Church that lives the way of the Gospel, not the way of the domination system of the powers of this world. It is a Church that prepares the way for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Teresa’s community of equality and friendship was also a prophetic critique of the political and social *status quo* of her day. She calls us now to Easter faith in the risen Lord and to live now in the reign of God through mutual love, freedom and humility. The risen Lord calls us to the exercise of hospitality, peace and reconciliation in the secular and political realms.

The Lord who rose from the dead gives us life and hope. Life and hope for ourselves, our family and community, our Church and our world. With Teresa our song is one of gratitude and jubilation as we sing forever the mercies of God. *Christ is risen! He is truly risen! Alleluia! Alleluia!*

Fr Greg Burke ocd - Easter Sunday 2003

