

When words just won't do.

Try reconciling the various narratives of the resurrection and you'll find that very quickly you've tied yourself up in knots! How many women went to the tomb? How many angels were present? What was said by whom to whom, who ran to the tomb – Peter on his own or Peter and the Beloved disciple, and so on and so on. It seems that trying to come to a consensus as to the sequence of events and the facts involved in the resurrection is an impossible task. Does that make the whole business a nonsense? Definitely not! The most powerful evocation of the reality of the resurrection is the witness of the disciples. If you spend just a short time thinking about this, then you are left with no other conclusion than the one we confess; *that on the third day he rose again in accordance with the scriptures.*

We all know that the mind is a very complex thing and that there are experiences we have, which for all our expertise, remain perplexing. The loss of someone we have loved deeply and dearly is a massive blow and yes, we dream vividly about them to the degree that we can almost smell their presence and sense their closeness, but we know it's only a dream. The disciples must have experienced the very same feelings and emotions about Jesus, but they knew he was dead, make no mistake about that. So how realistic is it to believe that what they experienced that Sunday was indeed the physical presence of Jesus and not some sort of communal hallucinogenic event?

In all of the debates and discussions about the Resurrection we are left floundering because of the limitation of our language. Words such as *physical, real, raised, seen, appear* are all words that convey a sensate understanding of presence. This is what we see before us, and our senses tell us that it is real, tangible and comprehensible and de facto we are convinced. In other words what we see exists within our time and space. Words such as *spiritual, ghost, form*, evoke a different response, one which effects mystery and doubt. Is what we see the actuality of what is before us?

Now all those words are used at one moment or another by the evangelists to describe the nature of the resurrected body of Jesus. We are told his body had a physical form but also a spiritual dimension. Jesus could appear and be seen as real but also be taken for a ghost, being in one place and then at another without restriction. The evangelists, just like us, seem utterly perplexed by the event they are struggling to convey. All they have at their disposal are words and these words seem totally incapable of expressing the reality of what has happened. What then are we left with when our words seem inadequate?

The faith of the disciples in the reality of the risen Jesus, is the concrete certainty of why we celebrate the Resurrection. We have their witness as the truth that Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead. This faith and this witness took them to martyrdom and it is this faith which we express in our lives. It is why the resurrection makes us Christian. All the words we use to express this faith will always be inadequate because we are attempting to express the presence of the living God amongst us and this reality cannot be confined to words but must be communicated and put across in action and deed. To quote Pope Francis quoting St Francis: *Go and preach the Gospel and use words if you must.*

The resurrection is the Gospel in action, faith lived and the living Christ present amongst us.

Happy Easter! Alleluia, alleluia!