

Mors et vita duello... Death and life contended

It's time to shout it out loud "Alleluia, Christ is Risen" and it's time to understand what it means. The last three days of liturgical celebration has allowed and enabled us to immerse ourselves in the *truth* about our humanity. To see how *truth* received in an overwhelming expression of love, is consumed and swallowed up in what to human eyes appears to be a total extinction. Love has been blotted out and is no more. On Good Friday the words of the gospel seemed impossible to deny, as all *went home beating their breasts*. What then has happened? Good Friday has transformed to Easter Sunday, and the immensity of what that signifies is what we have to comprehend. To begin to do that we need to go back 2,000 years to that Sunday morning following the crucifixion, and try and align our feelings and emotions with those of the devastated family and friends of Jesus, and see how it ties in with our own experience of loss and the transforming power of God's love.

We lose someone we love and our lives are convulsed. Whether it is through accident, natural disaster, illness or violence, our minds are left numb and cold. One cannot begin to imagine the sorrows that the families of the South Korean ferry victims are currently going through. This is precisely where the disciples were on that Sunday morning. Their minds scrambled, their hopes shattered and their future nowhere. The love that they had encountered and shared with Jesus was now just memory, to be cherished for sure, but still gone. The women who went to the tomb did so in the full knowledge that they were entering a place where darkness dwelt and where a corpse lay and their minds were enmeshed in that darkness which seemed total and overbearing. But what they experienced at the tomb brought light into the heart of their darkness. What met them was not the annihilating numbness of nothingness, but an experience of life enhancing vitality, that at first overwhelmed them with fear, but which in its unfolding, cast aside that fear and transformed it into light. The love which they feared had been totally wiped clean, stood before them in a reality of presence which initially seemed impossible, but which ultimately transformed them. Death itself was conquered by the love it had seemed to have overcome.

There is no way of knowing what happened, no way of knowing when or how it happened. The fact of its proof lies not simply in the emptiness of a 2000 year old tomb, but in the living presence of Jesus amongst us now. God's love for us in and through his Risen Son Jesus Christ brings us all through our own damaging Good Fridays and lifts us from the depths of our own despair to stand upright and contend with that last enemy, death. God's love for us and through it our love for each other, is the weapon we need to fight against the darkness that can be such a heavy burden to carry. The challenge is to be able to believe in the presence and reality of that love in the midst of our darkness and to make it real. It is a challenge which we have to contend with daily and the proof that we are ready and willing to meet the challenge lies in the resounding proclamation we make today. Christ is Risen Alleluia! Every Sunday, as we gather to celebrate the day of the Lord, the liturgy asks us to make that proclamation as witness to our faith.

What has come into being in him was life, life that was the light of men; and light shines in the darkness, and the darkness could not overpower it.

Yes, death and life contended, and the love of the Christ who died for us, now victorious, lives for us.

Happy Easter