

REFLECTION FOR EASTER SUNDAY 2021

“This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad” (Psalm 118:24).

I was like a child who had just lost all of his Easter sweets. I was crying and screaming so much that I lost my voice.

I was four years old, and my parents were going out to a friend’s party that night. They were leaving me at home... with my uncle’s wife. Now, they had left me at home before, but always with my grandmother to take care of me.

But now, for the first time, they were leaving me at home with my uncle’s wife I was not familiar with. When she showed up at the house, I made her life a living hell for several hours.

I cried until I was exhausted. No one needed to wake me up when I heard my parents’ voices in our sitting room. And, as I opened the door to our sitting room and saw my parents, I kept saying softly to myself, “You came back! You came back!”

I was afraid I had been left behind. So, for me, some of the most joyous words in the English Language still are: “You came back. You came back.”

I wonder: on that first Easter morning, did any of the disciples of Jesus whisper those words under their breath? “You came back!”

Let’s remember – nobody expected the resurrection. Nothing in this life could have prepared those disciples for what they encountered in the cemetery that morning. The Gospel tells us that they simply did not understand what ‘rising from the dead’ might mean. Perhaps that is part of the reason they did not expect an empty tomb.

But, on the other hand, from the beginning of the beginning, God has made it clear that He is in the business of life, not death. After all, what was the very first thing God did in the Book of Genesis? God creates... life. And if you read the scriptures with even a passing interest, you will see that God is constantly creating life, preserving life, restoring life, working to loosen death’s grip on the human family.

From the beginning, God acts to break the power of death. Yet, when human beings are convinced that God has abandoned them to the power of death and suffering – God comes back. And God comes back, to give us life.

When Adam and Eve found themselves hiding because of their sin – God comes back, assuring them that he has not given up on the human family.

When humanity’s evil brought about the great flood, and Noah and his family began to lose all hope for a future....

God came back. A chance to start life again.

The people of Israel were slaves in Egypt, calling out to a silent heaven for help. Just when they started to give up hope that God would ever help them, a man named Moses had his afternoon interrupted by a burning bush....

And God came back. And Pharaoh set the people free.

In a little corner of the Roman Empire, God's people wondered if God had abandoned them, giving them up to the oppression of the Romans.....

But God came back. The virgin Mary heard an angel's message. In an insignificant stable she gave birth to a son. God had come back.

Throughout the life and ministry of Jesus, our Saviour showed us that God always comes back, and God comes to give us life. Every action of Jesus should prepare us for the empty tomb.

In the person of Jesus, God came back to unravel death, and restore life. To restore life to the poor, the powerless, the sick, the sinner, the hungry, the oppressed - God comes back.

There are days and seasons when we feel as though God has left for good, and we are stuck. The point is, whenever you and I stand weeping at the darkened tombs of our lives, whenever you and I feel beaten down by death, or sickness, or depression, or loss, or fear, or pain – whenever we feel powerless and abandoned...

God comes back.

+ A relative's wife left him after 15 years of marriage. Her departure broke his heart. He went to his church and screamed at God. Eventually he gave up since God appeared to be somewhere else. But now, a few years later, he has found healing along the cracked edges of his heart, and is taking a chance on love, again.

God came back.

The apostles did not believe the women when they first announced the resurrection.

Do you believe them? The wisdom of this world tells you that Death gets the last word, that life is full of meaningless suffering, that once we're in the tomb, we stay there.

But, for those who pay attention, there is a different message, a beautiful message. It is roaring out to us from the empty tomb. Jesus died. But he came back. He came back, to give us life.

Easter is the greatest and the most important feast in the Church. It marks the birthday of our eternal hope.

Easter is a feast which gives us hope and encouragement in this world of pandemic, pain, sorrows, and tears. It reminds us that life is worth living.

Easter reminds us that every Good Friday in our lives will have an Easter Sunday, and that Jesus will let us share the power of his Resurrection.

Each time we face a betrayal of trust, and with God's grace we forgive the betrayer, we share in the Resurrection of Jesus.

Each time we fail in our attempts to ward off temptations – but keep on trying to overcome them – we share in the Resurrection.

Each time we continue to hope – even when our hope seems unanswered – we share in the power of Jesus' Resurrection.

In short, the message of Easter is that if we put our Faith and trust in the Risen Lord, nothing can destroy us – not pain, sin, rejection, betrayal, despair, discouragement, pandemic, not even the tomb of death can hold us – because Christ our redeemer lives, and we shall live.

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Fr Patrick