

Easter 2021 -A Sacred Journey

Let us lift up our hearts to the one whose cross became our bridge
and who goes step by step with us every day.

Peter Steele sj



Towards Easter 2021...
a story to remember
a journey to undertake
into this now...
an enduring promise to embrace
gift of hope
of healing
of whole-making
of holy.

In this now moment,
this Easter 2021...
we find ourselves in a world
caught in the ravages of Covid 2019
beset by death and suffering
ravaged by war and abuse
challenged by injustice and inequality
weighed down by fear and anxiety.

In this now moment,
this Easter 2021...
the universe celebrates
springtime in the global north
and autumn in the global south
sacred seasons-
enmeshed
creative tension
windows into Mystery
at once
promise
new life
bursting forth
at once
promise
letting go
death
transformation
and then...
rising
again.



In this now moment,
this Easter 2021...
we yearn
we seek
we let go
we die
we are nourished
we hope
we rise
we live
we discover
we act
we celebrate!



The perennial rituals of Holy Week...are not there to be celebrated as ends in themselves: the whole Passover experience is for the grounding and anchoring of us during the pain and passion of our lives, for our coming home to the wonder and challenge of our true identity in God

'We are already one, but we imagine that we are not. And what we have to recover is our original unity. What we have to be is what we already are.' Thomas Merton

'The earth itself is our home. In his death the risen Christ has become the heart of this earthly world, the divine heart in the innermost heart of the world...we do not need to leave her for the life of God dwells in her. When we want both the God of infinity and our beloved earth- when we want both for our eternally free home, there is but one path.

-Karl Rahner

IN THIS EASTER 2021- AT THE OPEN TABLE OF NOURISHMENT



The Eucharist intends life.

The dying at its heart is for the sake of life.

It is not a magic moment of stasis but a transforming action,
a process which spills out into the lives of those who receive...
whose bodies become bread for the broken world.

In place of the take-away host,
we take time to digest the words of the scriptures,
(and the scriptures of our own lives)
to break the bread and pour the wine
and so come to know ourselves as gift- and as given- for others
-Cf Anne Thurston Eucharist: Passion for Life

Reflection:

Call to mind the people with whom you gather at the table of nourishment.

What is the scripture that speaks to your heart at this time ...nourishes you ...disturbs you ... challenges you...calls you to be bread for the other?

Journal. Share

Ritual: Break bread together



'This piece of bread is the body of the whole cosmos. If Christ is the body of God, which he is, then the bread he offers is also the body of the cosmos. Look deeply and you notice the sunshine in the bread, the blue sky in the bread, the cloud and the great earth in the bread. Can you tell me what is not in a piece of bread? The whole cosmos has come together in order to bring to you this piece of bread. You eat it in such way that you come alive, truly alive.' -Thich Nath Hanh

Let us Pray

*Blessing the Bread, the Cup
For Holy Thursday*

Let us bless the bread
that gives itself to us
with its terrible weight,

its infinite grace.

Let us bless the cup
poured out for us
with a love
that makes us anew.

Let us gather
around these gifts
simply given
and deeply blessed.

And then let us go
bearing the bread,
carrying the cup,
laying the table
within a hungry world.

Jan Richardson- *Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons* p 133

IN THIS EASTER 2021- AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

Like Jesus, we too shall die, and, because of him, we are able to pray that our earthly life will also be transformed. Yet our own paschal mystery is not a once-off end-of-life experience. With eyes to see and faith to believe, it can be recognised as the pattern of all life.

The decline and deaths we endure – our Good Fridays – are many and varied. We suffer the loss of our youth, our dreams, our wholeness, the hopes we have for our family or community, the images we hold of God or our loved ones, and our trust in our institutions...We need to grieve and to grieve well. We need to lament. The people of ancient Israel knew this; there are more psalms of lament – cries of anger, protest and doubt – in the Book of Psalms, than hymns of praise. Lament, it has been said, means to “taste the tears of God”. How then do we come together to communally taste the tears of God...?

Good grieving means not just coming to terms with what has died and gone, but allowing it to bless us. Good grieving allows me to experience the sorrow of my losses but also the pleasure of what I still have. Instead of being embittered by my ageing body, can I modify my expectations and goals and continue to enjoy the delight that a walk in the bush can give? Can I be grateful for what my body can do, rather than what it can't do? I may not be able to scramble, but I can certainly stroll. And I can recall and allow the wonderful memories of all that my younger body experienced and enjoyed, to bless me for the life I'm living now. – The Pattern of All Life- Patty Fawkner sgs- The Good Oil

Reflection:

What is it that has died / is dying in this now time...in me... in the peoples of our world...in my country...in our church...in our Earth?

What is longing to be transformed from death and brokenness to life and wholeness? How might I respond/

Journal. Share

Ritual:



1500 ancient oak trees the first Cathedrals will be sacrificed to rebuild Notre Dame cathedral in France
You are invited to sit with an ancient tree Temple in your yard or neighbourhood...in silence...in solidarity...in protest... call to mind all who are abused...

Let Us Pray:

May we dare to look all deathliness in the face and find the love of God waiting there behind it, calling us to follow down the dark reaches of life into the transformative power of your love. Gather up the brokenness, the inhumanity and injustice in our world. Disturb our hearts that we too may become your healing love and promise of a future in this now time of our journey. Amen.

IN THIS EASTER 2021- IN SILENCE WE WAIT

'For you O lord, my soul in stillness waits, truly my hope is in you.' Ps 62

Holy the tending,
holy the winding,
holy the leaving,
as in the living.

Blessed is the One
emptied for us,
blessed is the One
wearing the shroud.

Holy the silence,
holy the stillness,
holy the turning
and returning to earth.

Holy the waiting,
holy the grieving,
holy the shadows
and gathering night

Blessed is the One
who came
in the name,

Holy the darkness,
holy the hours,
holy the hope
turning toward light.

Blessed is the One
who laid
himself down,

Song of the Winding Sheet-
Jan Richardson- Circle of Grace P 141

Reflection: Spend some time in solitude and prayer. Journal



IN THIS EASTER 2021- WE CELEBRATE



The Gospel stories of Easter are stories of more than celebration. They evoke in various ways the disciples' transition from despair at the death of their friend and leader and the loss of their own hope, to joy and the understanding that God has freed them through his death. Disciples cowering behind locked doors find Jesus in the room with them. Disciples leaving Jerusalem in grief find him walking with them. Mary Magdalene, grieving as she goes to the tomb to anoint his corpse finds him waiting unrecognised for her outside the tomb. These stories all point to the mystery of God's presence and victory in what seemed to be a crushing defeat.

In a stirring passage, St Paul begins with the words 'Nothing can separate us from the love of God'. He goes on to list the human catastrophes that might be expected to do so. He was confident because he believed so strongly that God had raised Jesus from the dead. Today Paul might have added to his list of things overcome all the experiences of the COVID-19 — the sickness, death, isolation, impoverishment and loneliness that it has brought with itself. For him the raising of Jesus meant that beyond these things lay a hope and love that were stronger than death.

This year, as we contemplate all the things that could separate us from hope, Easter invites all of us, whether or not we share Paul's faith, to reflect on what matters to us deeply enough to sustain us in the face of loss and death. If the celebrations of Easter are muted, its challenge to reflect on our lives and world is sharpened

- Andrew Hamilton sj- Easter as an Enduring Story of Loss and Hope- Eureka Street- April 2020

Reflection:

What are the signs of hope and meaning for you at this time in our world? How are you moved in the depths of your heart? What sprouts of new life are emerging? What excites you? ...challenges you...inspires you?

Journal. Share

Let us pray:

God speaks ...

When your Easter comes
I shall be around you
I shall be through and through you
And I shall steal your body
And give you to your love.

-Mechtild of Magdeburg

Let us Sing/Listen- Autumn Easter James Maher msc (available on YouTube)



Perhaps in a southern Easter,
we are shown the gift of dying.
Why else our strange hope
in the fading colours,
the falling leaves,
the letting go.

There is a gift from beyond, perhaps,
in this fraying transparency of flesh-
the slow then sudden change,
from visible to invisible,
known to unknown.

Something new can come
but only through the dying.

And not just in the image of the old,
but truly new
as yet unseen.

Ever hoped for and ever a surprise,
this resurrection appears
'midst the very molecules of nature...
yet it is not her doing.
It is more than she (or we) can do
more than cycles or seasons can give.

Such a happening is utter grace.
We conceive it only through faith,
and in the lively chill of Easter air,
it draws our heart with its unbelievable
promise.

Easter Blessing

The blessing of the morning light to you,
may it find you even in your invisible
appearances, may you be seen to have risen
from some other place you know and have known
in the darkness and that that carries all you need.

May you see what is hidden in you
as a place of hospitality and shadowed shelter,
may that hidden darkness be your gift to give,
may you hold that shadow to the light
and the silence of that shelter to the word of the light,
may you join all of your previous disappearances
with this new appearance, this new morning,
this being seen again, new now, and newly alive.

David Whyte: Easter Morning 2015



We offer you these reflections for use over the days of Easter in the hope that they may speak to you at this time of the global pandemic. You may choose to use them individually or in a group. We suggest you take your time with them, selecting and adapting them according to your needs. — Dorothy, Terry, Maria