

THE EASTER IN EVERYONE

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An old Russian Easter carol connects the old customs and the new expectation of Christian people who celebrate Christ's Resurrection.:

“Easter eggs! Easter eggs, Give to him who begs!

For Christ the Lord is arisen.

To the poor, open door, something give from your store!

For Christ the Lord is arisen.

Those who hoard, can't afford- moth and rust their reward!

For Christ the Lord is arisen.

Those who love freely give- long well may they live!

For Christ the Lord is arisen.

Eastertide, like a bride, comes, and won't be denied.

For Christ the Lord is arisen!”¹

Easter has been called *The unsurmountable frontier*. It comes to us as nearly Pure Joy. Jesus had died the loneliest of deaths. Falsely convicted as a felon, and silenced once and for all as a heretic, Jesus of Nazareth died in agony.

The thousands who are facing and dying in agony today from the world-wide epidemic the coronavirus, might well look back and recall the death and Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus died in agony. Abandoned by the God he had proclaimed with uttermost certainty, and by the disciples with whom he had shared his

¹ Adapted from D, Triplett in *Earthen Vessels*, Jan 1995; Quoted in *Synthesis, YR A*, March 23, 2008, PNSMI Publishing, Boyds, MD,pq,4

abundant life, and whom he spent years teaching. Now they were nowhere to be found. Fearfully they fled, interested primarily in saving their own lives.

A victim of possibly the cruelest death penalty ever devised, Jesus died repudiated as a traitor, and humiliated as a “prophet.” Although, the particulars in the accounts of Jesus last moments of life may vary in description, understanding, and significance, Jesus entered what the famous Roman Catholic New Testament scholar, Hans Kung called “the insurmountable frontier”- death- which is the end of everything.²

With his death, the cause of Jesus, the mission of Jesus, the validity of Jesus also ceased to exist. When his corpse was laid in the rock-hewn tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, the Jesus movement lay every bit as dead as he was. Supposedly, judged by God as godless.

The ghastly events in the “valley of the shadow of death” experienced with Jesus brought his followers to God. In other words, we have a *Passion* story only because we have an *Easter story*.

What happened? The Resurrection- unlike the crucifixion- is never depicted or described in the Gospels. No one witnessed it. No one expected it; at best, the disciples were *reluctant* believers who were worried or doubtful after they saw him.³

The great German poet Goethe said, “The highest cannot be spoken.”⁴ This holds true in our attempts to describe the Easter event that breaks the bounds of human vocabulary.

² Kung,Hans; quoted in *Synthesis*, YR A, March 23, March 23, 2008;PNMSI Publ.,Boyds,MD,p4

³ Mt.28:17 and Lk.24:11

⁴ Goethe,Johann Wolfgang von; *ibid.* *Synthesis* YR A, March 23 2008;PNMSI Pub.,Boyds,MD p4

Yet each year in and year out we celebrate and examine the Resurrection appearances of Jesus. We observe the humanness of those who were blessed to become Apostles who recognized and met the Lord Jesus Christ after his Resurrection.

What can it all mean for us? What can Easter mean for us? I'd like to share an Easter sermon by Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, who on April 8, 2007 said, "What the events of Good Friday and Easter tell us is that every single human being is implicated in something profoundly wrong. We say glibly that Jesus died for our sins, that he died to save humankind- and thereby we say that we are all in need of something we cannot find or manufacture for ourselves. We are in need of a word, a gift, a touch from someone else, somewhere else,, so that we can be made free of whatever it is that keeps us in the clutch of illusions and failures. If the purpose of Jesus dying was that all might be made whole, the implication is that all have been sick. Good Friday tells all of us, those who think they're good, and those who know they're bad, to look inside and ask what part we would have played in the drama of the Lord's death.

"There is only one innocent character in that drama and it isn't you or me. So for all of us there is something in our lives that would, if it left unchecked allows us to range ourselves with crucifiers. We have some habit of selfishness or fear, some prejudice, some guilt that we don't want confronted, some deficit in love or lovability. In some way, however small, we have already contributed to the death of Jesus. He is there on the cross because we are the way we are.

But on Easter Day, this bleak recognition is turned on its head. We were all involved; yet the combined weight of every human failure and

wrongness, however small or great; all of that could not extinguish the creative love of God. God has entered our human story; he has lived a life of divine and unconditional love in a human life of flesh and blood. He has not protected himself, or forced anyone to accept him. In this world that human beings have made for themselves, this world of greed, racism and politics, divine love loses. Divine love is helpless to maintain itself in the real world. The fact of error and failure that affects everybody in the world draws Jesus into its darkness and seems to destroy him body and soul. That says Good Friday, is the kind of world that is, and we are all part of it.

“Yet there is more than the world to think about. If Divine love is really what it claims to be, unconditional and eternal, it will not be destroyed. What’s more, the human embodiment of that love, the flesh and blood of Jesus, cannot be destroyed.

St. Luke in the book of *Acts* records how the disciples, the friends of Jesus ate and drank with Him after He was raised from the dead.”⁵

We repeat this when we celebrate the Eucharist. Coronavirus has made it necessary that we separate ourselves from each other. But the evil virus can only survive, if it can replicate itself when human beings come in close proximity. It survives as it spreads from one person to another. In time, the virus will die out. In the meantime, until the community gathers as the larger church, we share the Holy Spirit when two or three are gathered together in His name. Jesus will be in the midst of us through Holy Spirit. The life that God brought into the world in Jesus is forever with us. May you, your family, and your friends have a *Blessed Easter!* AMEN

⁵ Williams, Rowan, Archbishop; quoted in *SynthesisYR A, March 23, 2008*; PNSMI, Publishing Boyds MD, p.4

