

Week beginning 5th April, Easter Sunday - Heaven on Earth lies open before you

After the Easter gospel I waited on the lectern and looked at the people. At such timeless moments I can sometimes feel the relentless rhythms of their hearts – the murmur of harmony or the turbulence or conflict. This awareness fills me with wonder. These are times that I see, with a painful clarity, the utter fallacy of the dualism that underpins so much of our teaching, preaching and evangelising. There are no longer two realities, the mystery of Easter convinces us – one ‘merely human’, the other divine; one the church, the other the world, one human, the other divine. In the baby-body of the Incarnation, in the destroyed body of the Crucifixion, in the shining, human body of the Resurrection – that is the same body in which all dualism has been transcended. To be truly human, it is now established, is to be divine. To be is to be blessed. To live is to be holy. Everything is grace.

To believe this is to be transformed into another way of perceiving our identity and our humanity. To believe this is to be subjected to a paradigm shift where we are present to ourselves and to others in an irrevocably transformed way. A veil parts. The stone is moved. The focus changes. In the light of this disclosure moment, I found it so moving to believe that the lifeless and vibrant, the full and empty, the struggling and hoping people before me last Sunday, were, without doubt, the very heart of the church, the blessed sacrament of the divine presence, the only true and real presence of the living Christ of the Resurrection. God comes to us disguised as our lives. Nothing is just ordinary any more. Every bush is a burning bush. This incredible revelation is, in fact, the very mystery we celebrate at every Eucharist.

At the end of Lent we read, “See, I am doing a new thing. I am sending a fresh stream through the desert.” The Resurrection promises that the dry places will always burst into vibrant life, that the stone will always be rolled away, that nothing stays dead for long. Every dream can be stirred into life, every dream re-kindled. To be sure, we all carry small graves of cynicism and despair within us. Most of us are acquainted with demons of guilt, shame and sadness. The stunning revelation of Easter is that this winter is all over. Without exception and for ever. There is no sin, loss, betrayal or despair that is final. All we have to do is to choose life, forgiveness and compassion. Small wonder that the Celts of old saw the sun dancing over the mountains of Easter morning.

The sun should dance for us, too. Everything is now new and fresh. Our lives are transformed . . . Heaven on earth lies open before you today for the taking. But there is one condition to this glorious transformation – of you, of humanity, of all creation – you must dare to believe it.

(Already Within pp 47,48,49)