

Easter Sunday, 2007

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To day is a life-giving day! In the middle of the darkness of betrayal, violence and death, God gives life!

The resurrection of Jesus is not just the reversal of the event of Good Friday, but a whole new deal. The past is gone; an entirely new existence is now possible.

We must grab this opportunity with both hands. We must ourselves leave behind the things that bring death and grab hold of the things that bring life.

On this day, the Gospel announces the risen Lord. We are aware of the contradictions and difficulties involved in the acceptance of this mystery. On the one hand are seeing and believing, and on the other are misunderstanding and confusion. The mystery of the resurrection defies our human understanding—it seems to go against all that we see around us—but resurrection is not something we understand, it is something we believe, live and experience!

Much of our meditation on Good Friday was about darkness, suffering, pain and alienation. We were reminded that, to be raised, we must at times have to sit with the uncertainty of sufferings and darkness in our lives, as we allow God to bring us through and to raise us up. The canticle, the *Hymn to the risen Christ*, points us to the fact that in Lent and Holy Week we have been drawing out the old leaven of corruption and wickedness and that now we move into a celebration of the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Any baker of bread or hot cross buns will know that eventually leaven or yeast will go off—go bad so that the whole batch must be thrown out and new leaven used. The Passover image of unleavened bread reminds us not only of the ancient Hebrews having to travel without leavening their bread, but also points to a break with the old and with the things that are poisonous and destructive. Such a break is made when we are willing to make the sacrifice to actively let go of destructive attitudes and behaviours.

In the United Kingdom last year, there was a lot of publicity about terrorism and the war on terror. On the anniversary of the London bombings, I was pondering what it was that made young men do what these young men did. I read an article about the young men attending religious schools. One of them pointed out how they had all come from backgrounds of crime or drug abuse. He said that they all had had a history of abandoning their values and faith but were now on a religious path.

I pondered why young men would take the step to become suicide bombers. My conclusion was that this was (in their way of thinking) the way of complete redemption, of restoration to God. If I am right in my theory, how sad it is! But if one is governed by black-and-white roles (as can happen in Christianity and Judaism as well as Islam) then the only way to be absolutely right with God is that sort of self-offering.

Our faith, however, is in the self-offering of Jesus for all who would be his disciples. This is the answer to all who want to do dramatic things to redeem themselves. It is also a reminder of the inexhaustible nature of God's grace—of life poured out.

The resurrection is about the fact that the deepest darkness of hatred violence and death is not big enough or strong enough to contain or overcome this love, because the one who gives himself is raised.

The exact nature of Jesus' resurrection will continue to be debated, but the experience of the disciples was the

profound sense of Jesus among them.

Christ is risen! It is something which will continue to raise contradictions and difficulties, but we will continue in this event of Easter, in our baptism, and our Sunday communion, week by week, to celebrate Christ risen and present among us.

So today is a life-giving day! We must leave behind the things that kill our humanity—hatred, war, malicious talk, etc.—and grab hold of the things that give life!