

## Easter Vigil 2017

So what was all that about....the drama of the Last Supper, the foot washing, the betrayal, the trying to stay awake at the back of the church, and the sheer gut wrenching events of the passion, played out musically, liturgically. And then last night, sitting waiting....why, what's it all about, after all, we know that it all going to be fine, we knew today would come...for heaven's sake we advertised it! If we knew this morning was going to come why put ourselves through it all; is there any purpose, is it worth it, the work, the rehearsals, the planning, the worry....

Can't see nothin' in front of me  
Can't see nothin' coming up behind  
I make my way through this darkness  
I can't feel nothing but this chain that binds me  
Lost track of how far I've gone  
How far I've gone, how high I've climbed  
On my back's a sixty pound stone  
On my shoulder a half mile line

Words of Bruce Springsteen. He has recently been in Australia with the E street band. He is 67, there's hope for me yet! He grew up as a Catholic and was educated by nuns one of whom apparently put him in a dustbin and told him he was worthless! As you can imagine in his youth he didn't exactly thinking of the church fondly! But he has wrestled with the idea of redemption of being, as it were, hauled out of the dustbin!

Perhaps what we need to do is to look momentarily eastward, to the Orthodox. They rarely portray the resurrection in their iconography; they are far more interested in the theology of Christ the liberator. The individual resurrection of Jesus is given over to a great corporate event as Christ our champion, liberates us from the tombs. The icons often showing Christ, his arm outstretched pulling Adam and Eve, humanity, through a broken door.

If this morning you feel, like me, that you have been dragged through a hedge backwards then we have achieved something! We should all feel like that this morning, as if we have been dragged through these events, with all the baggage of our doubt, our negativity, our fear. Look at the characters in the gospel, the women are terrified, the men claim it's a lot of nonsense, Peter is amazed. And the story goes on the disciples on the road to Emmaus are sad and disillusioned; Mary Magdalene is distraught, the disciples in the upper room are afraid, Thomas is in doubt. This suggests to us, does it not that we can only come to know the risen Christ through some kind of death, some disillusionment with ourselves and others,

some loss, bereavement, sense of fear, hopelessness or meaninglessness. It is in this way, provided we don't try and anaesthetize ourselves from the pain, that Christ will show himself.

Another feature of the resurrection accounts is the slowness of the disciples to recognise Christ, the Emmaus road travellers walk several miles with him, and Mary thinks he is the gardener. Our own faith too is a slow in dawning; we tend to think of the resurrection as an event happening outside ourselves, in history. Slowly we come to know the resurrection as something happening to us now. The risen Christ constantly breaks down the door of our closed minds as he came through the doors of the upper room, entering our consciousness, closed through fear.

Come on up for the rising  
Come on up, lay your hands in mine  
Come on up for the rising  
Come on up for the rising tonight

Left the house this morning  
Bells ringing filled the air  
Wearin' the cross of my calling  
On wheels of fire I come rollin' down here

'The Rising' by Springsteen; in it he takes us through what he calls 'stations of the cross' ordinary human experiences of love with its trials and tribulations, towards an opening sky. It was written in response to the events of the 9/11 attacks from the perspective of the NY Fire Dept.

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It is worth it all..... of course. Do we have to endure it....yes. Because it is only in this way that we can possibly understand the power of the resurrection, which gives us hope where hopelessness reigns, gives us courage where there is fear, and the strength to be open and vulnerable when before we could think of nothing but ourselves.

May the voice of the risen Lord resonate throughout the universe 'peace be with you.'

Christ is risen...**he is risen indeed!**