

REFLECTION FOR EASTER SUNDAY ~ 09 April 2023

The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

"God will repair what has been shattered, but not by mending it with something else. Rather, out of the old and very same material of its origin, God will impart to it an appearance of beauty pleasing to Godself." These words, written by Hilary of Poitiers – a 4th century Doctor of The Church, are a profoundly comforting lens through which to rejoice in the Resurrection. Sixteen centuries later, a philosopher and contemplative, Beatrice Bruteau, would echo Hilary's words:



Resurrection

Alma Woodsey Thomas

What we call "resurrection" is the full manifestation of the Incarnation itself. This is the revelation of what and who we really are... the divine life comes down from heaven and is sown in a perishable body. But the divine life gradually rises up as the imperishable that it truly is. . . The first humanity was from the earth, a humanity of dust; the second humanity is from heaven....Just as we have borne the image of the humanity of dust, we shall also bear the image of the humanity of heaven (see 1 Cor.15:47,49).

The stories of the Risen Jesus as he was recognized by the disciples are the source of both Hilary's and Bruteau's pondering. The disciples come to know their beloved Jesus as the Risen One, not by lightning or thunder or a startling appearance, but through those ordinary actions that he had shared with them while he lived with them before his death:

- ❖ he walks along the road with them (the two women in Matthew's account read last night at the Vigil)
- ❖ he shares a meal with them (with the disciples in the Upper Room, with Mary and Cleopas in Emmaus, and with the disciples on the seashore)
- ❖ he prepares a meal for them (for the disciples on the seashore)
- ❖ he calls the person by name (Mary Magdalene in the garden as we read in today's story in John's Gospel)
- ❖ he shows them and encourages them to touch the wounds in his hands and feet and side (the disciples in the Upper Room and Thomas eight days later).

Until Jesus repeats these ordinary actions, the disciples do not recognize him. Jesus bears both "the image of the humanity of dust" and "the image of the humanity of heaven" – "the old and very same material of its origin has now an appearance pleasing to Godself." When Jesus rises, the humanity of dust remains, now enlivened by the humanity of heaven. Philip Chircop sj has written a beautiful prayer-poem entitled "Invitation" that sends this same message – note the beautiful phrase "the warmth of your holy breath softening the hardened clay from whence we come":

Stand in our midst again, today
enter the circle of our fears
penetrate the darkness of our doubts
meet us where we are.



May we listen to your sung Shalom:
'Peace be with you ... Peace be with you'.
May we see your hands and your side.
May we feel the warmth of your holy breath
softening the hardened clay from whence we come.

Invited, curious like a little child,
we place our trembling hands not only on your wounds
but on ours too, and on the lovely brokenness of others,
breathing in, forgiveness; breathing out, forgiveness
wounds becoming the sacred place of mutual compassion,
and the springboard to an intimate song of communion and possibility
crafted in the heart: 'our Lord, and our God.'

We still walk the earth, we still share meals, we still call each by name, and we still have our own wounds, but with Jesus' resurrection and the promise that we, too, will finally share that resurrection, our ordinary actions become the ways in which Christ's hands and feet and heart remain on this Earth. Our joy in the certainty of Jesus' resurrection and our belief that we share in his resurrection are shown by how we treat each other, how we support each other, how we love one another. The "other" whom we love and hold in the "sacred place of mutual compassion" includes Earth herself and all Earth beings. Together we become part of the "intimate song of communion and possibility."

Peter reminds his listeners in the Acts of the Apostles, "God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead" (Acts 10:40-41). He is reminding us that the disciples ate and drank with Jesus and that we are to be witnesses as Jesus had invited the women to be. We are not passive witnesses to this wondrous reality; we are active participants in living lives that are grounded in and energized by that belief.

There is little wonder that our readings today find reason to rejoice. Last night we heard both the angel and Jesus tell the women, "Do not be afraid" (Matt 28:5, 10). The angel says it confidently because, "I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay" (Matt 28: 5-6). Jesus says it to give the women a way to live into the resurrection, "Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me" (Matt 28:10).



Resurrection Chapel, National Cathedral-DC

[Tim, 2011 Flickr](#)

Jesus has just greeted the women with the word, "Chairete" (Χαίρετε), meaning "Rejoice!" In an earlier chapter in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus uses that very same word, "Rejoice (Χαίρετε) and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matt 5:12). Jesus calls the women to their ministry just as he has encouraged the Samaritan woman to go to her community (Jn 4:28-29), Martha her ministry to preach his resurrection (Jn 11:20-27), and Mary

Magdalene to begin her ministry when she and Jesus meet in the garden (Jn 20:17-18).

All these women accept Jesus' invitation, knowing that it will come at cost to them. Ron Rolheiser omi echoes Matt 5:12, "We also celebrate the voices and wounds of the ones who died on Good Friday. The task of Easter is to rekindle the creed within ourselves. The earliest Christians, immediately upon experiencing the resurrected Jesus, spontaneously voiced a one-line creed: 'Jesus is Lord!' One of the tasks of Easter is to strain to hear the voices of Good Friday."

The psalmist reminds us that, at the heart of the resurrection story just as at the heart of the ongoing creation story, is our complete trust that "God's steadfast love endures forever" (Ps 118:1, 2). This certainty leads the psalmist and us to cry aloud, "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes!" (Ps 118:23). The Old Testament scholar, Walter Brueggemann, shows us that Easter may be a noun, but it is also a dramatic action verb as he pleads with our God, "Easter us to joy and energy and courage and freedom; Easter us that we may be fearless for your truth."

It is another source of joy that the three religions descendant from Abraham also share our holiest days at this time of the year. For Jews, Pesach (Passover) is an eight-day celebration that commemorates the emancipation of the Israelites from slavery in ancient Egypt. On the first two nights of the festival, the seder meal is eaten. This year Pesach begins on the evening of April 5 and ends on April 13. For Muslims, Ramadan is the month that celebrates the time when the first verses of the holy book Quran were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad more than 1,400 years ago. During this holy month, Muslims fast during the daylight hours from pre-sunrise to sunset. This year Ramadan extends from March 22 to April 20.

Now we bring our reflections full circle, back to our belief that resurrection and Easter do not mend our brokenness with something new. Even more wonderfully, with the resurrection, our creator God and Risen Christ and enlivening Spirit take our brokenness and shape it into something new, something joy-filled, something hope-filled, something life-giving.

Roddy Hamilton, in his poem-prayer, delights in the sounds of resurrection:

Stop! Did you hear it:
the stone roll
the grave clothes being folded
the body rise
it was like a whispered alleluia in the stillness of the dawn
but it was real

Did you hear it:
the angels muffled laughter as the women reached the tomb
the dawn break over the garden revealing footprints in the dew
the mountains bow in slow grandeur just out the corner of your eye
it was like something shifting at the edge of your sight
but it was real

Did you hear it:
The world hold its breath
the stars hesitate
the sun linger
creation fill its lungs
the air swell

so that the whole earth can proclaim: Christ is risen!

This is resurrection morning

We see the same images visually in the beautiful *Stations of the Resurrection*, created by the artist, Sister Mary Stephen, a member of the Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre who reside in Essex in the United Kingdom. During this Easter week, let us stop and listen and look. Hear one of these “sounds” or see one of the images from the resurrection story and allow it to nourish our spirits, enliven our minds, and delight our senses.



Sealed Tomb



Resurrection



Rolling Stone



Angel ~ Empty Tomb



Women ~ Tomb



Peter and John



Mary Magdalene



Women meet Lord

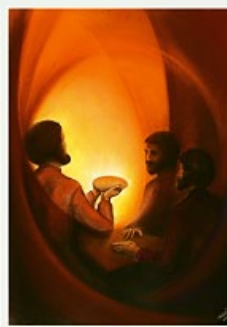
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Pascuas! ~~ Happy  
Easter! ~~  
Joyeuses Pâques!  
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Disciples



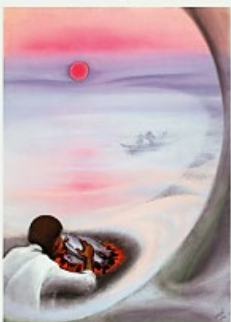
Walk to Emmaus



Supper at Emmaus



Thomas



Seashore



Lord and Peter



Ascension



Pentecost

Stations of the Resurrection
Sister Mary Stephen
Canonesses of
the Holy Sepulchre
Essex, UK