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From Death to Everlasting Life

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Chicks, bunnies, spring flowers, - even film personalities on Easter eggs tell us that Easter...oops, sorry, Spring Holiday time is here. The obsession with devaluing Christian festivals and misrepresenting their origins again overwhelms us. Behind this is the reality of the greatest incident in the history of Mankind and that a Man called Jesus died and came back to life three days after his death, as He had said. He literally was restored and walked among his people bringing light and energising his followers and ourselves with His victory over death. But is this important???? a one off event in history two thousand years ago, why was/is it significant, why important?.. Surely the miracles and teachings are sufficient to justify His existence. Did he really need to die and rise again?

Today as Pope Francis said recently, we do not need to go to the tombs of the Saints and Martyrs in the Catacombs, for we have thousands of Martyrs in this century and at the present time. Yes, some may be involuntary ones but nevertheless witnesses to persecution for faith but others consciously standing up for what they believe, men women and children. What propels someone to stand up for Jesus in view of threatened extinction and death? Many people of great faith are doing so in many parts of the world. Why would anyone sacrifice their chance to stay alive for the possibility of something greater, or someone greater, unless of course that something greater is so great that it overwhelms all other thought? Eternity is a concept too vast for many to take on board. Most of us can barely plan for tomorrow or plan a year ahead let alone eternity. Yet these martyrs surrender their understanding of this mystery for two great reasons. The first of these is because of the Man who gave the promise and secondly the power and reason for His death.

Jesus Himself gave us the promise of Eternal Life. He warned us that we would not believe this easily. He said that many would close their minds. In His discourse recorded by John 'whoever loses his life in this world will keep it for eternal life' He refers to his death and rising many times in various ways. Even the Apostles did not fully grasp what he meant. In the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor they got a little foretaste but they could not grasp what Jesus was revealing. Equally the voice of the Father was heard by others indicating His unitive existence and His partnership with Him but this still did not fully convince His followers. It was not until he came back from the dead that they understood. It was not easy and still is not to grasp that death does not end His or our existence. We say Christ has Died, Christ is Risen and Christ will come again, but the words trip easily off our tongue without perhaps any real impact of these words and real meaning of this statement.

Many years ago my husband and I, were attending a vigil of prayer. There was a commotion at the back of the church and three children, worse for wear and unkempt wanted to come in. They were not welcome perhaps fearing further disruption, but by providence found themselves near to us. One child a little girl was dumb. Unable to speak, the two others were brothers, one very small and the other about eight. It was the little girl who wanted them to speak to us, she signed this in her own way. We spoke to the little ones in whispers. . The older of the two boys kept asking about Jesus and who He was. Was he really dead? Why did He die – what for? He seemed very concerned about this. Again in whispers we tried to explain. We had no clue where they had come from or who they were. Not easy therefore to gauge how to answer. Then wanting to give him hope I pointed to the Crucifix and then beyond to



‘The Resurrected Jesus’ hanging beyond...over and behind the altar. I said, as simply as I could, that yes, He did die but that he came back to life and is alive now and with us. The Childs eyes filled with awe and wonder- and then a slow exhalation of breath and a **WOW.....** **Wow** came from His lips and he bowed his head. The impact was profound. Our eyes filled with tears as we saw his agitation turn to awe. Those around too picked up on what was happening. The little girl too seemed relieved. A moment of reality for all. Jesus died and came back to life, all would never be the same again. In the life of this child the truth had penetrated.

But what is the reason for Jesus’ death—quite simply love. Love dies to self to raise us out of sin, out of destruction, negativity, fear, abandonment to a promise of eternal Joy. Could he have done it in any other way? Possibly – but he died as proof of both His Divinity and Humanity. He rose by virtue of the former. All came together at the moment of death. His two natures were exemplified. United with The Father and The Spirit he surrendered to death in obedience and was restored to life by His own authority and the will of the Father.

Now this surely is the final part of the Good News. Not only did he rise from the dead but he gave us the same promise of being raised in the same way and at the end of time with our own bodies. His body was so glorified that many, many of his disciples did not recognise Him. Indeed it was when he spoke to their hearts that they realised who he was, as he did to Mary Magdalene or to the disciples on the way to Emmaus. Yet they did recognise him by that grace that reveals the truth. He the sinless one took on our sin and because of the incredible sacrifice died to save us from ourselves and to **RESTORE** us to life and to be Our God and we His people. If ever there was a gift, surely His is the greatest.

Is this not why faithful and faith filled men, women and children are prepared to die in so many parts of the world today. Is this not the purpose of our existence to die to self and to witness to the Gospel but also to live forever united in Love with Him? When we wish each other a Happy Easter let us ponder therefore these word of Jesus.....

“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though he dies and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

These surely are the most ‘hope giving’ word of all time. He did not come to condemn the world but to save it. We are redeemed people.

Surely something to live and die for...

Alleluia.... He Has Risen!!! Halina Holman



Pope Francis.

This is the culmination of the Gospel, it is the Good News par excellence: Jesus, who was crucified, is risen! This event is the basis of our faith and our hope. If Christ were not raised, Christianity would lose its very meaning; the whole mission of the Church would lose its impulse, for this is the point from which it first set out and continues to set out ever anew. The message which Christians bring to the world is this: Jesus, Love incarnate, died on the cross for our sins, but God the Father raised him and made him the Lord of life and death. In Jesus, love has triumphed over hatred, mercy over sinfulness, goodness over evil, truth over falsehood, life over death. That is why we tell everyone: “Come and see!” In every human situation, marked by frailty, sin and death, the Good News is no mere matter of words, but a *testimony to unconditional and faithful love*: it is about leaving ourselves behind and encountering others, being close to those crushed by life’s troubles, sharing with the needy, standing at the side of the sick, elderly and the outcast... “Come and see!”: Love is more powerful, love gives life, love makes hope blossom in the wilderness. With this joyful certainty in our hearts, today we turn to you, risen Lord! Help us to seek you and to find you, to realise that we have a Father and are not orphans; that we can love and adore you.

Urbi et Orbi 2014

Feast days in April

1-4th HOLY WEEK. Holy Thursday 2nd

Good Friday 3rd

Easter Sunday 5th

Divine Mercy Sunday 12th

St Mark 25th

Catherine of Siena 29th

Happy Easter and Blessings to all

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