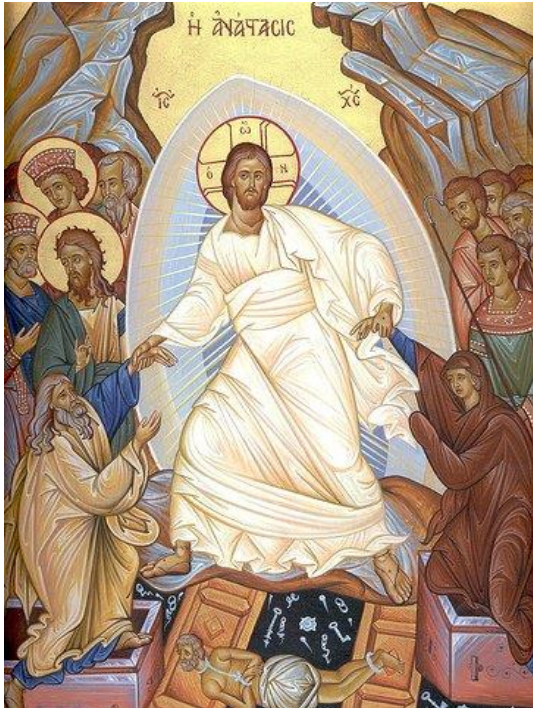


Meditation for Easter 2020



When we think of resurrection, if we ever think of it, it seems a remote and distant event. We might think that Easter celebrates only the wondrous event of the past, the awesome event of Jesus' rising from the dead, long ago. Or we might think of resurrection as a dream far in the future, as we confess in the Creed: 'We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.' As we recently recalled (Lent 5) Martha confesses such faith for her dead brother Lazarus: 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day' (Jn 11: 24). Jesus invites her to revolutionize this hope in a faraway event when he says: 'I *am* the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live' (Jn 11.25). In these words, Jesus turns upside-down the traditional faith Martha expressed, and smashes into pieces the remoteness of her hope by declaring that the eschatological, end-time 'Life of the world to come' is already, right now, breaking into people's lives. He dares her: 'Do you believe this?' Martha is summoned to take the risk of trusting Jesus as the one who, even now, ushers in the new age. 'I am the Resurrection!' It is happening now, today, April 2020, in our very midst. Don't get stuck in the past or fixated with the future – open your eyes to the Resurrection happening now, in your very life, today even!

In his book *True Resurrection* Mirfield Father Harry Williams affirms:

Resurrection is always a mystery. It is always a miracle. It is always the creative act of the Eternal Word. Because that Word is spoken now in the present in terms

of what we call the common circumstances of life, there can be nobody who at some time or other has not thus been raised from the dead. But more often than not are eyes are holden and we do not know it.

We do not recognize resurrection when it comes to us. The presence of the Eternal Word is unnoticed, and evidenced only in the new life made available; just as at Cana of Galilee the guests enjoyed the good wine but did not know whence it was...

He goes on:

When we begin to recognize the power of the resurrection in the ordinary gritty routine of our lives, then we shall see for ourselves that all that separates and injures and destroys is being overcome by what unites and heals and creates. We shall no longer have to ask where and when this happens, for we shall have first-hand experience of it as we live as ordinary folk in the ordinary world.

He gives some concrete examples:

An artist, at first only painfully aware of an utter emptiness and impotence, finds his imagination gradually stirred into life and discovers a vision which takes control of him and which he feels not only able but compelled to express. *That* is resurrection.

Or a scholar or scientist as she pursues her research finds a favourite theory breaking up in her hands. She is left with no home in which to house the quantities of evidence she has collected. Then a new more adequate theory gradually takes shape in her mind which makes her more at home with her material even than she was before. *That* is resurrection.

Or a married couple find their old relationship, once rich and fulfilling, slowly drying up into no more than an external observance to the point where it seemed impossible that these dry bones should ever live again. Then a new relationship emerges, less superficially high powered and less greedy than the old one, but deeper, more stable, more satisfying, with a new quality of life which is inexhaustible because it does not depend on the constant recharging of emotional batteries. *That* is resurrection.

Or suffering, a severe illness, or a catastrophe like the premature death of someone deeply loved...people are never the same again. Sometimes they shrivel up and atrophy. But appearances can be deceptive. Under the devastation of their

ordeal...one can be aware that they are in touch with a new dimension of reality. They have somehow penetrated to the centre of the universe. They are greater people. They are more deeply alive. *That* is resurrection.

Or, on a lighter but by no means insignificant level, the person who slips on one of the many kinds of banana skin, the one whose great expectations are belied, the one who is tied to triviality, realizes the humour of the situation, and by his laughter shows he has risen above what cabins and confines him because he can relish the joke at his own expense. *That* is resurrection. (p11)

This Easter we are challenged to celebrate the Resurrection as a present reality, something we experience this very day. Of course we affirm, on the basis of the New Testament evidence, the historic event of Christ's resurrection. But just as we were thinking recently that Jesus suffers today in our midst, so too we now affirm: Jesus rises too in our midst...in the midst of our present world crisis...he is rising *now!*

So what does Resurrection look like today for us?

- whenever new ways of praying bubble up from stale outworn patterns...
- wherever giving replaces hoarding...
- wherever self-sacrifice trumps self-pity...
- wherever the desire to be in control yields to an attitude of letting go...
- whenever broadness of vision eclipses small-mindedness ...
- whenever confidence in God defeats pessimism...
- wherever creativity overcomes stagnation...
- whenever grumpiness surrenders to humour...

THAT is resurrection!!

What examples can you identify, in your experience?

Take some time today to name and celebrate small resurrections. They might not be dramatic but turn out to be life-changing.

Just as the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ took place secretly, in a hidden way (no one saw him actually rise from the slab of the tomb) but many experienced his risen presence, so maybe our resurrections might have the character of being hidden or inward, beginning in our inmost attitudes and mindsets, but will surely impact our lives and the lives of others....

All this is, of course, embodied in our Baptism, which we renew at this time. We have been baptized – for some of us that was quite a while ago! But the important, vital thing is that we live the baptismal reality today, in this very moment. We make

our own, moment by moment, what has been achieved in us. We don't have to wait for heaven to live eternal life. We walk in 'newness of life' right now. Paul declares:

Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ...if we have died with Christ, we believe that we also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus... present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. (Romans 6)

John's gospel gives us these words of Jesus:

My Father is still working, and I also am working... Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes...Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life. Very truly, I tell you, the hour is coming, and *is now here*, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. (John 5)

Resurrection – *now!!*

Leonardo Boff puts it: 'The resurrection is a process that began with Jesus and will go on until it embraces all creation. Wherever an authentically human life is growing in the world, wherever justice is triumphing over the instincts of domination, wherever grace is winning out over the power of sin...wherever hope is resisting the lure of cynicism or despair, *there* the process of resurrection is being turned into a reality.'¹

Fr Andrew Mayes Priest of Limassol, Spirituality Adviser to the Diocese of Cyprus & the Gulf

Sing along....

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jh9f0nyz5wE>

¹ L. Boff, *Way of the Cross – Way of Justice* (Orbis, New York, 1980)

The Day Of Resurrection! Earth, Tell It Out Abroad;
The Passover Of Gladness, The Passover Of God.
From Death To Life Eternal, From Earth Unto The Sky,
Our Christ Hath Brought Us Over, With Hymns Of Victory.

Our Hearts Be Pure From Evil, That We May See Aright
The Lord In Rays Eternal Of Resurrection Light;
And Listening To His Accents, May Hear, So Calm And Plain,
His Own "All Hail!" And, Hearing, May Raise The Victor Strain.

Now Let The Heavens Be Joyful! Let Earth The Song Begin!
Let The Round World Keep Triumph, And All That Is Therein!
Let All Things Seen And Unseen Their Notes In Gladness Blend,
For Christ The Lord Hath Risen, Our Joy That Hath No End.

(Eighth-century Greek poet John of Damascus (b. Damascus, c. 675; d. St. Sabas, near Jerusalem, c. 754)