

The Promise of Easter

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Resurrection

The resurrection isn't the only supernatural event in the Easter story. The disciples of Jesus lived in a world of the supernatural. According to Matthew, when Jesus died, the earth shook and coughed up corpses all over and "many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised." After the resurrection of Jesus, these saints showed up in Jerusalem. Well, if just by dying Jesus could empty all those tombs, maybe his own empty tomb was no marvel.

No, in a world where spirits rose up on a regular basis, there had to be something more special going on than just another corpse walking about. This was a resurrection of many souls, not from death, but from deadness.

What do I mean by deadness? I mean the things inside that keep the disciples away from Jesus' funeral – fear, cowardice, lack of conviction and purpose. And I mean those same things in our own lives that prevent us from feeling alive – things like fear, cowardice, and lack of conviction and purpose. And things like the loneliness, grief and boredom that numb us to life.

It's as if we let parts of ourselves die and stuff them away in a tomb of the soul. Sometimes that tomb is not such a bad place. It is like a womb – safe and secure, comfortable and predictable. Our tomb-life may be nothing more than the safety and comfort of a nice predictable routine. Or it may be a shelter from the

world and its problems – a place to hide from the Jesus who called for a world where people care for one another. Whether it is escape or comfort, the time comes for us to roll away the stone and come out.

- Sarah York

Second reading: “The Easter Faith” by Earl Holt

Resurrection is real for all people – Christian or not – or it is real for none.

Jesus died. His death meant exactly what every death means: the end of his life’s promise, the end of his hopes, the end of his dreams, and also the hopes and dreams which other had of him and for him – of what they hoped he was, of what they wanted him to be...

Something happened in the minds and hearts of Jesus’ disciples, for whom everything had been lost. A transformation occurred, a radical shift from absolute despair to renewed hope, from a sense of the utter absence of Jesus to a feeling that in some way he was still with them. His death was not the end; it was the beginning. What had died became again lively in the world.

The possibility of transformation and renewal exists; it is in us. All around us are people whose lives, in ways large and small, have been transformed and renewed: those who have overcome the loss of what was most precious to them in the world, those who have won a battle with alcohol or drugs, those who have transcended the temptation to despair when life was at its darkest. Resurrection is not a long ago, unique, unlikely event, but is potentially present in all human life. It is a promise and a challenge, for it represents the possibility of radical change – transformation – based on a radical sense of hope...

Death threatens us not only at the end of our lives but at every moment, the thousand little deaths of the spirit, the grievances we carry with us, the discouragements and sorrows that weigh us down, the sense of frustration or futility that darken our days and drear our nights. Easter is the promise that we can be reborn; it is the promise of new life. It is the assurance that in the midst of death we are in life.

The Easter faith can be expressed in two words: life wins.

The Promise of Easter (responsive reading)

Who is to say what Easter is that we should celebrate this day and sing for joy?

Easter is promises remembered and fulfilled of death and life that lies therein.

It is the promise of the planets in their turn, the infinite fidelity of stars and suns and seasons.

Easter is Winter promising to spring
that earth shall yield its death to life again.

It is the growth promise of the dormant seed, the barren meadow and the naked bough.

It is the birth promise of all creatures
which have life and breath and being.

Easter is ancient sorrows stilled and hopes remembered. It is the memory of Jesus dying in Jerusalem.

It is the promise that his life shall never die
as long as we still seek to dwell within his ways.

It is the promise that the heart shall be reborn as hatred dies and love is given birth.

It is the promise that the mind shall be renewed
as ignorance is lost to newfound truth.

Easter is the promise to everyone who journeys from the death of prejudice to the life of understanding.

Easter is promise to everyone who casts away
the errors of the darkness to dwell within the light.

Lo, Easter is of earthly promises and human hopes that make the human heart
forever young.

A song of life which springs from death,
a joyous human song, forever Alleluia sung.

-- Eugene Navias