

PANDEMIC AWAKENINGS Week 3

We are very grateful to Jim Cogley for sharing with us his thought provoking response to Covid 19 which forms the basis of these daily sharings – only some changes added

Being an Easter Person, Opening to New Life Day 1



Every year Easter comes and Easter goes. What does it mean for us? Do we treat it with a certain indifference? Does it carry significance and has it any real bearing on our lives? The truth that God raised Jesus from the dead is presented as the ultimate in the Christian experience but how does it impinge upon our personal experience?

This year because of Covid 19 it may mean a lot more than usual because it is we who have been on the way of the Cross and it's not yet over. Our Easter still awaits and it is not fitting in neatly with our liturgical calendar.

We are inclined to think of Jesus' resurrection as his victory over death that offers the reassurance that there is life beyond the grave. The older we get the more important that reassurance becomes. Resurrection is certainly about the afterlife. One very elderly lady was asked if she believed in the hereafter and she said, 'More and more as I get older. Whenever I bend down to pick something up I have to ask, what exactly am I here after!'

It's not unusual when a discussion on the afterlife happens that someone will throw in the remark, 'But how do we know, how can we be sure? No one has ever come back to tell us what's out there. That person would usually profess to being a Catholic but in reality must have only paid lip service to the Resurrection. There is one who like Columbus in 1492 went beyond the known and returned to tell us of a whole new world. Up to Columbus's time it was generally believed that the world was flat and that on a voyage westwards there was a point where you would sail over the edge and that was the end - it was the point of no return. By returning from the dead Jesus offered the hope of resurrected life to all his followers. With the eyes of faith we can now look at the grave no longer as a hole in the ground but as a doorway to new life.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LjCzPp-MK48>

Resurrection Moments – Day 2



On Easter morning a stone was rolled from the tomb. If I were to think of my heart as the tomb could there be a stone across that prevents me from experiencing a fuller and more satisfying life?

Resurrection is really at the heart of life and is something we experience at so many times in our lives. This present time of crisis in particular offers great resurrection possibilities. It is only when we are forced out of our comfort zone that we awaken to deeper realities. We now stand at one of the most critical and yet highly teachable moments in history.

Each of us is going through a process of grief just now. We are grieving for who we thought we were and not so sure of who we really are. We are grieving for life as we knew it and have a sense it may never be quite the same again. We are grieving for the normal touches of love and affection that make us human.

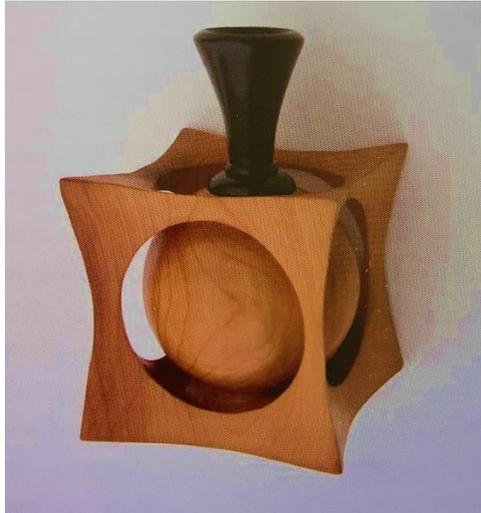
When we grieve for a loved one and having allowed ourselves to experience all the emotions that are part of that process we then come to a deep awareness that they are now more with us than they ever were because they are with us in spirit. That is Resurrection.

Sometimes we encounter obstacles that don't go away no matter how much we pray or wish them to disappear. Yet from somewhere we find the strength to cope and rise above them. Some problems persist but we do manage to outgrow them. **Is that not a foretaste of resurrection?**

When we find ourselves in conflict with someone and remain with the difficult process of seeking understanding it often appears that all is lost but just then a light of awareness shines out of nowhere and everything comes back on track – **Is that not a beautiful Resurrection moment?**

Finally, it's no harm to remember that Easter is not just about Jesus and his Resurrection, but it is also about me being called to live the resurrection, to **create resurrection moments**. A kind encouraging word can help bring a person through a dark valley in their lives. A bit of consolation can lift up someone bowed low in sorrow. We were not put here to make money; to acquire status or reputation. We were sent here to search for the light of Easter in our hearts and when we find it to share it generously. The light of Easter needs to dawn first in our own experience and as we celebrate it ourselves to offer possibilities of new beginnings to those who find themselves still stuck in Good Friday and think that to be the end of the story. To be the light, and sometimes to hold the light for those who are in darkness, is both the challenge and the privilege of being an Easter person.

The Challenge – Day 3



Jesus' Resurrection challenges us:

To open our hearts to the miracle of new life

To the wonder of transcendence

To the beauty of transformation.

To not remain stranded in grief.

To arise from the ashes of defeat and disappointment.

To allow Jesus, by his Spirit to do for us, through us and in us

More than we can ever ask or dream or imagine.

Jesus' Resurrection invites us:

It invites us to love again after our love has been rejected.

It invites us to trust again after our trust has been betrayed.

It invites us to hope again after our hopes have been shattered.

It invites us to believe again after our faith has been shaken.

Jesus' Resurrection awakens us:

To see Divinity in the Ordinary

To see endings as new beginnings

To the freedom of non-clinging

To the awesome wonder of ourselves

Jesus Resurrection teaches us:

To look beyond appearances

Like Mary of Magdala to call him 'Master'

As Mary had believed

She now saw that which she believed

Nature shows us that change is inevitable and despair is unnecessary; that nothing remains the same forever, not even the darkest-seeming fate. The awareness that change is inevitable and flowing with it rather than having it forced upon us is something that engenders freedom. This in turn gives rise to joy that is our natural state of being; it is the invincible summer that still exists even in the darkest winter. Joy is awakened through suffering, and underlies both happiness and sorrow alike.

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=top+15+most+inspiring+mother+teresa+quotes

In the Shadow of the Cross there is a Doorway to New Life

Day 4



Whatever message goes out from our churches it will have little relevance unless it is set against the backdrop of the Corona Virus. A passage of scripture can be precisely that, a backdrop, against which something currently happening in our lives can be understood in a much broader light. The Gospel story of the Raising of Lazarus is one that we can easily associate with grief and loss and how we can resolve it. The topic of grief is really relevant in relation to this virus.

The medics tell us that it is mostly those with underlying conditions that are particularly vulnerable to the disease. Could it also be that unresolved grief is also an underlying condition. Unresolved grief is

itself pandemic but it usually goes unrecognized. It may well be one of the big underlying conditions that leave us vulnerable.

From the Gospel story it becomes clear that both Mary and Martha are grieving deeply. Their faith has been shattered by their friend's absence and apparent indifference when Jesus chose to remain elsewhere when they needed him most. What they say to him is similar. 'If only you had been here our brother would not have died.' 'If only' carries the strongest possible emotions; regret and disappointment, veiled anger, betrayed trust and even of friendship broken beyond repair.

'Where have you laid him?' Jesus asks. They had taken the only option open to them at the time, Lazarus was buried and a stone had been placed over the tomb. That action is deeply symbolic in relation to what we tend to do both with grief along with other more painful and shameful realities of life; we choose not to talk about them; we bury them in our unconscious in the mistaken belief that out of sight out of mind. We place a stone over the entrance as a statement that we don't want to go there and neither do we want anyone else to go there.

The problems with burying emotional issues is that we can only bury them alive and they can and do come back to haunt us. The past is never where we think we have left it rather it is more likely to be right where we are, only we fail to recognize that it is very much alive and well in the present and in all sorts of ways, e.g.

- We find we can't cope with silence for too long, we need background noise - TV or radio.
- We need to pray yet find it very difficult.
- We find ourselves irritable and biting the noses off the ones we love.
- We begin to wonder why we are always so tired and drained of energy.

This is the truth of how our past may be affecting our present and in the light of Covid 19 how it could influence our future. We can hesitate to roll back the stone

Jesus is as clear: 'Roll back the stone'. If you want life, face the issue. In terms of the Gospel path it is the only way. There will be a stench initially but that will clear. Being born again means bringing what was in darkness out into the light.

Companion for the Journey - Day 5



When setting out on a long journey it's important to have a suitable travel companion. For this reason many set out together but return alone having discovered that they were never compatible in the first place. My primary companion as I set out on this Corona journey is myself. I may need a compatibility check:

- Am I comfortable with silence or do I always need noise and distractions?
- Does the TV have an off button?
- Can I sit still for very long, or am I always restless and on the go?
- If my habitual reply to how are you is, 'getting there', where am I going?
- What do I say to myself when others are not around? How is my inner dialogue?
- How comfortable am I in relation to my past or do I beat myself up over it?
- Am I as kind to myself as I try to be with others?
- Do I always need something to complain about?
- Am I a blamer who always needs something to complain about?
- Do I tend to be my own judge and jury?
- Are my faults more obvious to me than my gifts?
- Do I like who I have become?

Many of us may have been far too busy until now to even consider such basic questions. Yet the quality of our lives and our level of contentment depends on the answers.

A Time of Opportunity – Day 6



Sometimes the root meaning of certain words gives us a clue as to their deeper meaning. In China, where this virus began, the word ‘crisis’ means, ‘a dangerous opportunity.’ This seems to capture the reality of the times we live in quite accurately. There can be no denying the danger side while it also provides an unprecedented level of opportunity. For those who may have long thought of doing something different or taking up a hobby, but could never get the time, this may be the time. It will also give us space for perseverance to get through the inevitable frustrations that come with any new pursuit.

With every creative venture we need to get over that initial hump before we feel creative juices flowing and we begin to enjoy what we are doing. An ancient piece of Irish wisdom is that if you make a good start on a journey, you are already half way there. Many years ago while in secondary school there was a brief strike and with schools closed I learned the art of juggling. This became an art that I carried through life. It would be nice to look back on this crisis and see it, not just as something I managed to endure but rather as a time when opportunity came knocking on my door and I grasped it with both hands.

Every cloud has a silver lining but it is not always obvious.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g3hsBGwQjBw>

A Time to Sift – Day 7

Prayer for a Pandemic

May we who are merely inconvenienced
Remember those whose lives are at stake.
May we who have no risk factors
Remember those most vulnerable.



May we who have the luxury of working from home
Remember those who must choose between
Preserving their health and making their rent.
May we who have the flexibility to care for our
Children when their schools are closed
Remember those who have no options.

May we who have to cancel our trips
Remember those who have no safe place to go.
May we who are losing our margin money
In the tumult of our economic market
Remember those who have no margin at all.

May we who settle for a quarantine at home
Remember those who have no home.
As fear grips our country, let us choose love.
During this time when we cannot physically
Wrap our arms around each other,
Let us find ways to be the loving
Embrace of God to our neighbours. Amen

Yesterday we reflected on how the Chinese word for crisis had the root meaning of ‘a dangerous opportunity’. In Greek, the root of the word crisis means, ‘to sift’. This entails shaking out the excesses in order to leave only what is important. That’s precisely what a crisis does. It shakes things up until we are forced to hold onto what matters most while the rest falls away. During this time of enforced reflection we may begin to evaluate our lives through completely new eyes and be able to chart our future with the things we consider important, like family, friends and community, being given the consideration they always deserved. The moment when we stand in danger of losing something is also the time when we value it most. Just to shake hands or to give someone a hug will be a novelty when all this is over. The value of living as a community may well be appreciated like never before. Even in our darkest hour humour will always shine through. One joke spawned in the light of Covid 19 relates to an avid sports fan that was overheard saying, ‘Two weeks now and no sport on TV. I notice a lady sitting on the couch across from me. She looks nice. I think she’s my wife!’



Together we can stand strong. You can stay connected with Luisne through weekly postings called PANDEMIC AWAKENINGS

which Fr Jim Cogley has composed in response to COVID 19.
<http://luisne.ie/lights-in-the-darkness/>