

## LIGHTS IN THE DARKNESS



Our Lady's Island Co. Wexford

### **Soul Food – Daily Deliveries**

It is a great privilege to provide these daily postings entitled 'Lights in the Darkness', from Our Lady's Island during these challenging times. Hopefully they can shed some light on issues and questions that may have been thrown up for us in recent times and help us hold our course as we navigate our way through these stormy waters. Their widespread use is entirely due to all of you who faithfully pass on these postings every week. This is a very teachable time with so many suffering deeply and hungering for life giving words of faith that uplift and encourage. While we celebrate Easter the reality is still some way off.

For any of you who use our web-cam facility, it is unfortunate that the system was damaged, apparently maliciously. Services are currently available on Facebook as we wait for an upgraded replacement that we hope will arrive during the week. Our Good Friday service is at 3pm and our Holy Saturday service is at 7.30pm. Wishing you all a safe, peaceful and hope filled Easter.

emails to - [frjimcogley@gmail.com](mailto:frjimcogley@gmail.com)

[Weekday transmissions of services take place at 9.30am](#)

Access is also available up to 24 hours later

Tuesday 30th March

## Idolatry



### Retail Therapy – The Rush that Goes Nowhere

A lady is depicted laden down with shopping but trapped inside a wooden vase that acts like a cage. Having got what she wants she is still not free as her needs go much deeper. Idolatry is something we associate with ancient rituals and the worship of false gods. Such a belief can be very convenient in distancing it from ourselves and avoiding how it can be an everyday practice in our lives. Whenever we believe that anything or anyone out there can make me happy, I am guilty of Idolatry. This makes it endemic in society. It could be called the 'if only' syndrome. If only I had this or that, if only I was in relationship with so and so, then I would be happy. The reality is that I might feel excited if my wish list were fulfilled, but long term I would not be happier than I am right now. Nothing out there can make me truly happy, it can only come from within. As Shakespeare said 'All things are with more spirit chased than enjoyed' and so we get more enjoyment looking forward to having something than when we actually receive it.

Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> March

### Betrayal - Spy Wednesday

Traditionally, this day of Holy Week has been known as Spy Wednesday, because of its associations with the betrayal of Christ by Judas. To find a place for everything that happens to us in life is an enormous challenge. This is particularly true when we have experienced betrayal, hurt or abandonment. Many who were adopted carry such feelings through life and never get over anger towards their mother for 'having given them up'. Such feelings don't allow them to ever appreciate the hell on earth the mother experienced in having to do what was best for her child at the time. The beauty of the Christian narrative is that it provides a context for integrating such experiences. Here we see that even Judas, with his blatant betrayal, played a crucial role in the Passion story that eventually led to Resurrection. Whether it be our own betrayals or those we have experienced from others, they all find their place in the overall picture. It is the great mystery of nothing being wasted in the divine economy, and the hand of Providence writing straight with the crooked lines that are our lives.

### Holy Thursday

There is something very touching and even intimate about that gesture in the Gospel where Jesus washes feet of his disciples. We can just imagine him moving from one to the other with a special word for each of them that they would remember for the remainder of their lives. The wonderful thing about Scripture is that you can read a passage all your life and still see something new in it. A detail I failed for so long to see the significance of is where Jesus took off his outer garment before he washed the disciples feet. As he looked down at that motley crew he knew what they were made of. Judas was already plotting his betrayal, Peter within a few hours would be making oaths denying that he ever knew him and the rest of the band would be running scared in his hour of need. It is against that backdrop that we see the significance of Jesus taking off his garment. Before doing the washing of feet, which was the menial job assigned to slaves, he would first have had to let go of so much. His feelings of hurt and betrayal, disappointment, judgments and even resentment all had to go or else he would not have been able to stoop so low.

For us there is also a stripping whenever it comes to any form of service because it's never about us. We may have to let go of our natural self-consciousness or shyness even in doing simple acts of kindness that carry any possibility of rejection or misunderstanding. In Scripture it's called dying to self. Letting go of judgments is a big step for all of us because we can be

most intolerant of others mistakes shortcomings. Seeing how others need to change and being blind to how a change might need to come about in us first is also a big step. Whatever it is in us that allows what other people think to rule our lives and limit our service is our outer garment that we need to get rid of before we can be of any use to anyone else.

When Jesus comes to Peter he encounters resistance. Peter is shocked at Jesus doing what he is doing and doesn't want him doing it. It should be the other way around. Notice what Jesus says; *You don't understand now what I am doing but very shortly you will see its significance.* What was that about, 'very shortly you will see?' The washing was obviously cleansing and associated with forgiveness. Very shortly Peter would become very conscious of his need of Jesus forgiveness. After Jesus was arrested and Peter standing in the courtyard would lose his nerve at the thought of being guilty by association. When asked if he were one of Jesus' followers he began to swear that he was not and didn't even know the man. At his third protestation the cock crew and this man who hours before had professed undying loyalty was now guilty of betrayal. As he walked away where do you think he looked? In the direction we all look when we are filled with guilt and remorse, down. As he looked down what was he looking at but his feet that a short time earlier been washed by the man he had just betrayed. In other words Jesus by washing his feet had shown that he had already forgiven him even before he sinned. So what a wonderful gesture Jesus had performed both for him and us. What a wonderful truth that before we even sin we are already forgiven. If that is not good news I don't know what is? All of that finds expression in the Eucharist when we say that it was on the night that he was betrayed that Jesus took the bread and the wine and gave it to us. In other words it was in the face of betrayal that he gave himself to us so completely; what amazing, what fantastic love.

Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> April

Good Friday

The following reflection was sent by Jean, a reader who was musing on the mystery of Good Friday: *While wondering if God is all loving, then why would He allow His Son to suffer so much. It just didn't make sense. Then I remembered an incident from my own life. I love dogs, and I once had one; a most stupid looking animal, but I really loved him. He became very sick. I knew all week that there was something wrong, even though the vet couldn't find anything. One morning, I came home to find him cowering in a corner, with his mouth open in absolute agony. I knew it was serious and thought it might be a stroke. I got to the vet as fast as I could and he agreed that I had good cause to be so concerned. He then advised me to leave, as it would be too upsetting. At five they rang to say he had taken a turn for the worse,*

*and they needed my permission to put him down. I told them to do it immediately and I would come in to take him home. I went and collected him; his coat covered in blood. With tears in my eyes I realized how much I would have given to take his pain on myself and not to have him suffer. Then I began to reflect on the love of God for me...to think He would allow His only Son, to suffer and die for my sake. It was one of those wonderful revelations that has never left me!*

### HOLY Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> April

All that is of the earth must return to the earth. For every human being there is a tomb. Is death an end or a new beginning? The world and nature speaks of death and rebirth. Every winter daylight wanes as the sun sets earlier and earlier. Eventually on the shortest day we see it, if at all, for a few brief hours. Such is the reality of our planetary life. However experience has taught us that, without fail, the days will gradually lengthen and the blossom of spring and the warmth of summer will return once more bringing us renewed hope and joy.

Nature shows us that change is inevitable and despair is unnecessary; that nothing remains the same forever, not even the darkest-seeming fate.

Spring already lies in the womb of winter when all feels lost and everything appears empty and lifeless. The challenge is to calmly wait the appointed hour of change knowing that it will come and that it cannot be forced. The caterpillar has its own unique timing to emerge as a butterfly. Grief too has its season. Discipleship demands patience knowing that nothing in the universe stands still, all is in movement, constantly changing and assuming new forms. It would be vanity to expect the present to persist and so it is foolish to resist change. In the words of the Lebanese poet Kahil Gibran, 'It's the lust for comfort that murders the passion of the soul and then walks grinning at the funeral.' Life is only found at the edge of our comfort zone.

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.

## Easter '21



### New Life

What you see is a traditional symbol of Easter; the egg. This goes back to pagan times and was seen as a symbol of the new life of Spring coming forth from the womb of Winter. In Christain times it is a symbol of Christ rising from the tomb. On the inside of the one shown is a delicate rose bud just ready to burst forth in radiance. It's a sign of new life just ready to be born.

Easter is the climax of the Christain Year because it is the big victory celebration. Traditionally Christians kept vigil on the night before Easter. V stands for vigil but it also stands for victory. It is Christ's victory over the discouraging darkness of sin and the bewildering darkness of death. For the early disciples to whom Christ appeared, their reaction was one of astonishment. We share in that sense of astonishment as we listen to the account of how Gods plan of salvation came to such a wonderful conclusion in the resurrection of his son.

One of the wonderful things about Easter is that it's pure unadulterated miracle. When someone dies you don't expect them to rise again, at least not in three days. When a burial takes place and the grave is filled in you don't expect the tomb to burst open and to see that person ever in the flesh again. On Good Friday when Jesus was laid in the tomb even hope seemed hopeless. All appeared lost and it was as if darkness was reigning supreme. Good and evil had clashed in Jesus and to all appearances evil had won.

Then on Easter morning the miraculous happened. God raised Jesus from the dead. What appeared to be the end was in fact a new beginning. The

fruits of that beginning have sustained the Christian church for two thousand years and are still ours to enjoy.

It is no accident that we celebrate Easter at this time of year when the signs of new beginnings are all around us. The spring that has lay sleeping in the womb of winter has just been born. The light is coming to meet us as the hours of daylight are becoming greater and the hours of darkness becoming less. The trees that have been barren are beginning to put forth shoots and leaves. All around us death is giving way to new life. Nature itself sings its own Easter alleluia.

When the risen Jesus appeared to his disciples they had difficulty recognizing him. For years we may pray for something and yet when the answer comes we may not recognize it. Such was the case with those ancient Israelites. The hope that for so long seemed hopeless had finally borne fruit. The prayers of so many had finally been answered.

V stands for victory and not just victory over death but also something we experience at so many times in our lives.

In relation to Covid we all look forward to emerging from this tomb of lockdown when we can start creating a new normal and get on with our lives.

When we go through a period of questioning, doubt and confusion and emerge with a new sense of faith and hope, that is a glimpse of resurrection where we discover that God is greater than our doubts and is able to lead us through them.

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 too 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. Is that not a foretaste of resurrection?

On Easter morning a stone was rolled away 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?

It could be an addiction, a compulsion or an old hurt that I have nursed for far too long. It may be something that I feel guilty about but have never admitted to myself or confessed to the Lord. Two of the worst forms of bondage are guilt and resentment and often the one I hold resentment towards is myself.

Remember in the account of the Passion after Peter had denied Jesus and Judas had betrayed him. One wept tears of repentance and looked to the Lord for mercy. The other wept tears of remorse and turned destructively towards himself in despair and unforgiveness.

Whatever the stone at the entrance to any of our hearts may be Jesus invites us to face up to it and recognize it for what it is, so that we too can experience the new life of Easter.

Monday 5<sup>th</sup> April

### Blessings

In many churches salt is blessed on Easter Sunday. This is used for blessing and even in non-Christian settings is understood to be a healing and cleansing agent.

The tradition of blessing places stretches back into biblical times where we find that after the desecration of the Great Temple by the pagans there was a ceremony of re-dedication. This ceremony gives some indication as to its purpose. It suggests that a holy place, when contaminated by negative influences, needs to be cleansed, restored and again made fit for purpose. Many people like to have their home blessed, but lack any real understanding as to why this might be important. Yet we sometimes hear a couple say that 'since we moved in to our new home nothing has gone right for us', or that 'there is a room in our home that always feel cold no matter how high we turn up the heat'. Very often a warm or cold atmosphere is felt in a house even when the occupants are absent. Knowing what went on in a house before it changed hands can provide vital clues as to why the atmosphere may be cold, hollow, or even hostile. It is to clear the negative energies of the past that a blessing is called for in order that the new owners can begin with a clean slate. Otherwise the energy of conflict left behind by a couple who were separating can make it difficult for a loving family to live together in peace and harmony.