Reflection on: Re reading the Easter narratives, 14th April 2021 – Sr Marie

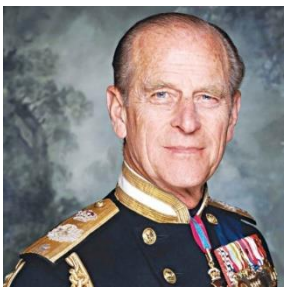
Opening words: This week, we have a transcript. We have attached some pictures/ resources to help you in your meditation.

If you are meditating alone but would like to feel 'with us' we meditate at 7.30pm on Wednesday in our homes during this time of pandemic. The tradition we meditate in is Centring Prayer which is fully inclusive of all traditions of Christian Meditation and welcoming of World Traditions.

Welcome to Christian Meditation in the Centring Prayer Tradition: A very warm welcome from Fiona, Marie, Rob, Hazel and Paul, the leaders of the Christian Meditation group at Wisdom Centre, Romsey. The whole session is about 50 minutes. We meditate beginning with an opening prayer followed by reflections and then 25 minutes of silence. We hope you enjoy your meditation with us.

Opening Prayer: *Eternal God,* through our meditation may the ears of our hearts be attentive to your Word. May we seek and find You. Awakened to Your presence may we be joyful, embodying peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-awareness. May we follow Your teaching, seeking also, the wisdom of the Holy Fathers and Mothers. May we, therefore, commit to community, love of earth, peace and justice making. **Amen**

Introduction:
We are in the time of commemorating Jesus' resurrection and his new life which, as Pope Francis says: "..is not an event of the past; it contains a vital power which permeates this world. Such is the power of the resurrection that it rises transformed through the storms of history (The Joy of the Gospel 276).



We are also in a time of mourning with our Queen after the death of her dear husband. May her belief in the resurrection strengthen and comfort her at this time.

The place to go to learn more about the resurrection is obviously the Christian scriptures. Faith in the resurrection of Jesus is a central part of the Christian faith so we do need to look at what scripture has to say about the new life of Jesus after he rose from the dead. These accounts are to be read with the eyes of faith. Many of the relevant passages from scripture are accounts of the post resurrection appearances of Jesus to his followers. These accounts are not literal descriptions of strictly historical facts but rather attempts by the evangelists to convey the effects of mysterious faith encounters with Jesus that his followers had after he died- encounters that convinced them that he was alive and was communicating with them.

Donal Dorr in his latest book '*A Creed for Today'* writes: "A crucial feature of the resurrection of Jesus is that it is only through faith that we know anything about it and that we cannot *imagine* it. An interesting point that we learn from the New Testament is that nobody saw Jesus rising from the dead and we don't know exactly *when* it took place. It is usually assumed that it was early in the morning of Easter Sunday. What the gospels tell us is simply that early on the Sunday morning was the time when his followers began to learn and to believe that he was alive, despite the fact that he had really died on the Cross. Luke's gospel tells us that as he died he committed himself into the hands of his 'Abba' God (Lk 23:46). From that moment he was with God in this new definitive post-death manner. It is hard to see why he should be left waiting for a couple of days in some kind of intermediate state. From God's point of view, the death and resurrection of Jesus were two aspects of one reality. It is only we human followers of Jesus who need to look at these two aspects as though they are quite different – and that is why we tend to assume that there

was a time gap between them. The reason the disciples of Jesus had to wait until the Sunday to discover that he was alive was to ensure that they knew that he had really died – and, in line with the Jewish understanding of that time, had 'gone into the realm of the dead.'"

Donal Dorr continues: "A second point is that we are left with uncertainty about *how* it took place. Was it God who raised him from the dead or was it that he rose from the dead, presumably under his own power? The majority of the scriptural texts suggest that it was the work of God (e.g. Acts 2:24, 2:32; 3:15; 4:10; 10:40). These texts bring out the inseparable linkage between the death of Jesus and his resurrection. On the other hand the Synoptic Gospels have texts that suggest that Jesus himself is the one who rises from the dead (Mk 8:31; Mt28:6; Lk 24:6). If it is the case that these gospel texts are suggesting that Jesus is the active party in his rising from the dead, then they are implicitly affirming that Jesus is divine, since it is utterly beyond any human power to rise from the dead.

The third point that Dorr raises is that Jesus' new life was a bodily life, he is not a ghost or a disembodied soul. "*They gave him a piece of broiled fish and he took it and ate it in their presence."* (Lk 24:30) and in John's gospel the risen Jesus invites Thomas to *'reach out your hand and put it into my side; and stop doubting and believe'* (Jn 20:27). So we have to conclude that as soon as Jesus became alive after death, he lived in a bodily form. The fourth thing that is brought out by the appearances of or encounters with the risen Jesus is that there is no point in somebody who is still living in this present life trying to 'cling on' to the risen Jesus (Jn 20:17). Clearly Mary Magdalen is being taught that she can no longer relate to Jesus in the way she did before his death. This indicates that while we are still alive we cannot really have the kind of relationship with him that we have with those around us. We can only have a relationship of faith with him.

The fifth point that Dorr raises is that from these post Easter encounters it is not easy to recognise Jesus at first (Lk 24:26) "We can only encounter him when we have been given the amazing grace of having a loving faith relationship with him. It is '*the disciple whom Jesus loves'* who realises that the mysterious figure who has told them to throw out their net on the right hand side of the boat is actually the risen Jesus (Jn 21:6-7). Mary of Magdala recognised him only when he addressed her by name, reminding her of their mutual love (Jn 20:16)."

"The final point we learn is that even though the new life of Jesus was a bodily one, it was not limited by the laws of space and time that apply in our universe as it exists at present. His followers experienced his presence even when the doors were locked (Jn 20:19). Some gospel accounts suggest that his followers will encounter him only in Galilee, while others have the encounter in Judea. Some accounts suggest that his appearances came to an end after forty days but Paul's letter to the Corinthians say he appeared to Paul some years later (1Co 15:8). Modern science has taught us that in our present universe, the categories of space and time seem to be far more flexible than we once assumed. This makes it a little easier for us to envisage the possibility of a transformed universe where space and time operate quite differently from how we currently experience them. The post-resurrection accounts in the gospel suggest the existence of a transformed universe, but they do not tell us anything at all about how the physical laws operate."

Dorr continues "The gospel accounts give the impression that the evangelists were not able to tell us about the nature of the new life of Jesus, apart from two important points. First, he has gone before us to prepare a place for us (Jn 14:2-3) with the one he calls Abba. And second, through his Spirit he still remains with us his followers (Jn 14: 15-16).

The encounter stories are more concerned with telling us about what a difference it makes to *us*, the followers of Jesus, to believe that he is really alive. They tell us how our belief in his resurrection will affect the way we will experience our lives from now on and how we will live them out. This is very clear in the Emmaus story: '*Were not our hearts burning within us when he opened the Scriptures to us'* (Lk24:32). Life and suffering and death all become meaningful and worthwhile once we understand through faith the meaning of the life and death of Jesus.

A personal faith encounter with Jesus gives his followers (of today and then) a gift of coming to have some understanding or glimpse of the overall pattern – the plan of God. This plan is the one in which Jesus '*emptied himself'* and *'humbled himself'* in enduring a tortured death and was then vindicated by God, being *'exalted'* to the highest place (Phil 2:7-9). This changes everything for his followers. In the case of these two disciples, it led them to immediately take on the task of rushing back quite a long distance to tell the others that Jesus is alive. For us too, it enables us to find meaning in our lives and our death. It give us a new purpose, new hope, new energy and a renewed commitment to follow in his way.

In Johns account of his meeting with Peter, Jesus provokes Peter into saying how much he loves Jesus, and Jesus in turn gives Peter the task of looking after the believing community (Jn 21:15-17). This text brings out the crucial link between love and ministry. For us Christians today, as for Peter, the animating force of our lives and our ministry must be our love for Jesus, as a response to his merciful love for us."

"To be human involves having our bodies engage in a constant interchange with the world around us – breathing in air and expelling out carbon dioxide…no human body appears out of nowhere. Each one is the product of billions of years of evolution – an evolution that involves the whole universe. So it is quite impossible for any human body to exist apart from the rest of the world and of the whole universe. Once we accept that, despite having died, Jesus is now living a personal bodily life, we have to conclude that he is not doing this in isolation. He is located within a universe as an intrinsic part of it. We have already noted that Luke's gospel insists that in his risen body Jesus can eat the food of *our* world (Lk 24:30). This indicates that the universe of which his risen body is an intrinsic part is not a totally different universe from the one in which he lived prior to his death, and in which we still live. He is still part of our universe. But this universe has become transformed in and initial way by the fact that the risen body of Jesus is part of it."

Images of Resurrection by Rosemary May Wells

Stillness in the first light dawning,
Risen life lights up the morning,
Faith confirmed beneath sky's awning.

Grief-laid women to the garden
In encounter know life's pardon,
No more need for hearts to harden.

Closed doors locked the dread inside,
Christ cannot be so confined,
His presence still with them they find.

Emmaus walk by those confounded.
Life's betrayal seems unbounded
Christ appeared – in love still grounded.

Fireworks shoot into the sky
Exploding sound and sight on high
A telling resurrection cry*

* In the orthodox tradition, fireworks at midnight on Easter Eve are let off to herald Easter Day.

Beginning Meditation:
As I enter into my meditation, I take a few moments to reflect on my mood. What has happened today, yesterday? Have I been able to feel the Lord's risen presence close to me, or am I filled with questions about his resurrection? Whatever I feel, I am here now, hoping to hear him speak to me through the words I have read. To help me be more receptive, I take a couple of deep breaths, then breathe normally. I may like to focus my attention on a favourite object, or perhaps a favourite refrain or perhaps the flickering of a candle or indeed an image of the resurrected Jesus.

25-minute meditation begins…

Post meditation:

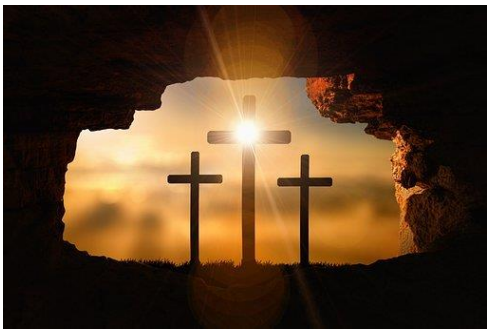
Twelve Ways to practice Resurrection now. From Immortal Diamond by Richard Rohr.

1. Refuse to identify with negative, blaming, antagonistic, or fearful thoughts.
2. Apologise when you hurt another person or situation.
3. Undo your mistakes by some positive action towards the offended person or situation.
4. Do not indulge or believe your false self – that which is concocted by your mind and society's expectations.
5. Choose your true self – your radical union with God- as often as possible throughout the day.
6. Always seek to change yourself before trying to change others.
7. Choose as much as possible to serve rather than be served.
8. Whenever possible, seek the common good over your mere private good.
9. Give preference to those in pain, excluded, or those persons with disabilities in any way.
10. Seek just systems and policies over mere charity.
11. Make sure your medium is the same as your message.
12. Never doubt that it is all about love in the end.

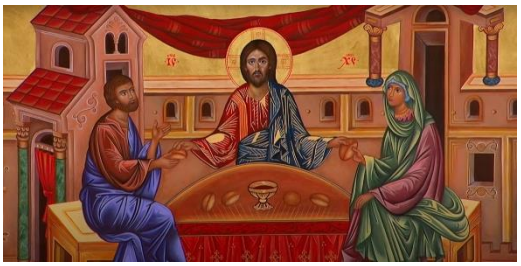
Closing prayer: Loving and Eternal God, we thank you for the gifts of prayer, meditation and contemplation. We thank you for being with us and for this community. May we, therefore, pray with all others, as one community, one world and one spirit to One God…Take some time for your personal prayer …**Amen**

Thank you for meditating with us, please join us again soon.

Images/ resources: *The Joy of the Gospel* by Pope Francis
A Creed for Today by Donal Dorr
Immortal Diamond by Richard Rohr.
Images of Resurrection by Rosemary May Wells
Pictures from *Pixabay*









Our peaceful outdoor spaces promote wellbeing and are open to all, free of charge.