



St Luke's in the City

150 years - 2009

Celebrating at the Crossroads

EASTER SUNDAY

23 March 2008

Dear Friends,

The resurrection was not televised! The religious revolution which is the Christian Paschal Mystery represents a symbolic transformation. Easter's significance is symbolical. A growing defensiveness since the rise of the sciences about the 'historicity' of Christian faith impoverishes us all - some having concluded that there is insufficient 'historical evidence' in order to substantiate Christian claims about resurrection, others backing ever more aggressively into a defence-of-empty-tomb corner.

When the Christian symbols – most especially crucifixion-resurrection – are discarded, with nothing to replace them, then the primal energies which are the ineradicable birthright of every human soul are projected onto objects, materialist-rationalist substitutes. The idolatries of money, property, possessions, fame, celebrity, independence, nationalism, tribalism, sexuality, family-ism, and so on inevitably become the illegitimate bearers of those primal energies. They cannot, of course, hold these energies safely, and the appalling consequences are only too well known. On the other hand, when the Church ignores or obscures the fact that its priceless treasure is a symbolic truth, and attempts to make faith marketable, 'simple', legal, or propositional then it not only distorts its own people, worse still it is the scandal by which others are prevented from encounter: 'You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life.' (John 5:39-40)

The reason why the resurrection has animated generations of disciples is not, as Jesus told Thomas, that the evidence of the empty tomb has compelled them. Disciples of Christ do not need a television spectacle. Rather, Christ's death and resurrection have such tremendous power because they express symbolical truths which are rooted in the very structure of the human soul. For the same reason Jesus' words have such great suggestive power, since they express symbolical truths which God has breathed into the human soul – Stephen Hawking's 'fire in the equations', the apostle Paul's 'image of the invisible God' in whom 'all things in heaven and on earth were created'.

Recognition, not evidence, is the crux of the matter. Mary Magdalene recognises her Lord. Emmaus travellers recognise the One breaking bread. Fishermen by the Sea of Galilee recognise the great catch. Recognition. For two millennia countless faithful disciples have recognised the truth of death-and-resurrection as the eternal, life-giving heart-beat at the centre of the cosmos. In pre-dawn light of this Great Easter Vigil recognition is what matters – recognition in fire and oil and water, and in Bread and Wine. May you recognise the Easter truth which is your birthright and which already exists in your soul. May you come to know ever more fully the liberation of the Paschal Mystery, and the new humanity which Christ is bringing to birth in you.

With my love,
David