

Lit Up With Hope

a sermon preached on

Easter Day

23 March 2008

at

St Luke's in the City, Christchurch

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Lecture: John 20:1-18

The Tomb was empty. What happened? Was it the same as what happened to Lazarus or the daughter of Jairus or the widow's son? No. These people were revived, resuscitated. They resumed their old life. The resurrection of Jesus was not the same. It was not a matter of returning to His former manner of life after a three day interruption. The resurrection of Christ means new life – the first day of the week – the dawning of the first day of the New Creation, which is a level of life beyond our human experience. The risen body of Jesus is no longer supported by the energies of physical life – but now lives by the energies of divine life. A life which was achieved through extreme suffering and the ultimate sacrifice.

The lesson we learned during the Triduum was that the place of our pain is deep within our soul, a holy place; that the point of our pain, is the point of our growth; that it was in the darkness of Calvary that the bright dawn of Easter began; that there is no Sunday joy without the Good Friday shadow.

The truth of the three days journey is of a road of broken promises and fallen idols, littered with betrayals and denials, marred by raw flesh and angry tears. This road is crowded by human beings some of whom had reached the ultimate levels of brutality and soullessness, while others, at one with their love for Christ were transcending their fallenness into a more hopeful way of following Christ.

The Triduum brings us to a realisation that there is new life, new power, new energy. It is a road to freedom and light through Christ's passion. A passion that strikes chords deep within us, and leads us in a search for a deeper meaning in our lives. However, Daniel O'Leary in his book, "Passion for the Possible," warns us of the "quick fix" philosophies and some of the "instant" new age remedies that are offered. He says, "While the suggested ways of affirmation to promote a worthy sense of self-esteem have much to commend them, the glaring omission, is the necessity of the way of the Cross." Only to the extent that we can accept, identify with and love the total Jesus – His desert time as well as His transfiguration, His good Friday experience as well as His Easter Day brightness - that we can fully experience His passion and suffering. The resurrection of Jesus provides an enormous injection of hope for the human spirit. Faith and hope enables us to endure pain, sorrow, illness and all the other rigours of life's journey. It is amazing what the human spirit can endure and overcome if it is nourished by the bread of hope.

At Easter we still feel the pain of the world, the pain in our families and among our friends, and the pain in our own hearts. But a new element has been introduced into our lives. It doesn't remove the pain, but it gives it a meaning. It lights it up with hope. All is different because Jesus is alive and speaks His words of peace to us. Faith in the resurrection of Jesus is the basis of our hope in eternal life. A hope, which enables us to bear patiently, the trials of daily living. Therefore, there is joy among us, and a sense of peace, because *we* know that life is stronger than death, love is stronger than fear, and hope is stronger than despair.

Christ is risen! Alleluia!

References: John 20: 1 – 18 S. O'Flynn, D. O'Leary

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