

EASTER MESSAGE 2020

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What meaning can we discern from the traditional Easter message of death and resurrection as we live through the mounting dislocation and tragedies of the Covid 19 crisis?

In his song entitled Friday Morning, Sydney Carter penned the line

'It's God they ought to crucify, instead of you and me, I said to the carpenter a-hanging on the tree.'

The 1960s folk songs of Sydney Carter attacked the rigid social thinking of the time. They challenged the listener to seek those essentials in life that promoted equality and justice. They challenged church goers to find the essence of Christian community beyond the 'temples made of marble'.

We move into Easter Week 2020, with the whole world focused on health and safety. Our certainties of social, political and economic thinking have been thrown into confusion. As a world community, we grieve for the dislocation, the isolation and for all we have lost.

In his address to an empty St Peter's Square, Pope Francis said that this is a time to 'separate what is necessary from what is not'. The Pope spoke of the ordinary people such as cleaners, nurses, supermarket employees, doctors, transport workers and caregivers who through the daily provision of their labour and talent are the heroes of this crisis.

The image from the passion gospels that strikes me in this time of crisis is the fear and isolation of the disciples. In so many of the post crucifixion stories, the disciples and their companions huddle together in a room. Their association with Jesus made them a target for any attempt by the authorities to crush the fledgling Christian community. It must have seemed as if they had lost everything.

Easter 2020 seems to bring a different understanding of the triumph of the resurrection. This year it strikes me that there are no choirs of angels to herald this remarkable event. The gospel accounts now seem low key. Female disciples visit the grave 'at

early dawn on the first day of the week' and are confused when they find no body. It is the women to whom Jesus first appears. 'Stop being frightened' he tells them.

In another appearance, Jesus just walks beside two disciples presumably escaping from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They do not recognize him until he breaks bread with them.

The heroes of these resurrection stories are grieving women and frightened disciples running from an impending terror. Their experience with Jesus is not full of awe, but one of compassion and sharing.

In Sydney Carter's most famous song, we sing

Dance, then, wherever you may be,

I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,

And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,

And I'll lead you all in the Dance, said he

For Easter 2020, what I would most like, (but will not be allowed), would be to dance with my prep school aged grandchildren after a large Easter Sunday family lunch. I need to be patient, as do all who long for connection with family and friends, and know that the crisis will pass. We need to use this time of patience to discern who we want to be and who we are called to be.

The 'temples of marble' are closed for this Easter week. For churchgoers, Pope Francis' challenge to 'separate what is necessary from what is not' is profound. The 'dying and the rising' of Easter 2020, is not an event we will attend. It is an experience we will live through with every member of our human family.