

## **Easter Triduum 2022 *Thought for the Day***

*Thursday*

In these three days, I'm envisaging a progress, a trajectory, from love to hate and back to love again; or rather, love, hate and love renewed, extended, or gone cosmic.

So tonight, it's all about love – a love that dares to assume the garments of a servant and wash disciples' feet; a love which shares a meal and elides that with the notion of sacrifice: this is my body broken for you, this is my blood poured out for you. It is a love which waits nervously, tremulously, fearfully in the garden waiting for betrayal, firstly by one disciple and then by another in the courtyard of the High Priest: Peter, you will deny me three times. A love which, almost, would rather not be there: If this cup could pass from my lips ..., but then sits through, endures, a show trial, torture and condemnation.

This is how much God loves us, reminding us of our original creation in the image of God, and now our redemption through the body of Jesus, like us in every way. This is how much God loves us: loving service, loving sacrifice; summed up in the words of an antiphon often sung on this occasion

*Ubi caritas et amor, deus ibi est.* [Rough translation = Where there is love and charity, there you will find God.]

*Friday*

In these three days, I'm envisaging a progress, a trajectory, from love to hate and back to love again; or rather, love, hate and love renewed.

Yesterday, Maundy Thursday was about love, so today is all about hate, the hatred that led to Jesus' crucifixion. But first of all that Passion reading from St John – wonderful and familiar, but pretty deadly if you are a Jew, especially in the past but potentially now too. There are 15 or 16 references to *the Jews* in that part of the Gospel, which probably refer better to *the Jewish leaders, a group of Jews, even the Judeans in Jerusalem*. How easy is it to slip from that seemingly anodyne generalized phrase, to the argument that *the Jews* caused the death of Jesus, and so should be persecuted, expelled, annihilated – and don't think it just happened out there, we were pretty good at it in this country during the medieval period.

Hate wears an ugly face and sounds an ugly voice: you have to use your imagination to picture the crowds of bystanders, but you can hear the sound as we shout Crucify, Crucify. You can trace a kind of anatomy of hatred in the actions performed on Jesus, now a passive recipient, firstly by the relatively civilized Pilate, by the High Priests, by the much less civilized ordinary soldiers. Dehumanizing those who are hated is always a first step; Isaiah has it right: He was despised and rejected by others, ... one from whom people hide their faces. But whose orders are they following, who has created the culture that allows, even encourages, such actions?

Hate makes you wonder ... about the pictures of the bombed Mariupol, so like Berlin of 1945; and about the aerial pictures of civilian bodies strewn across some Ukrainian streets; about the stories of women raped. It makes you wonder how people arrived at doing this, ordering this, turning a blind eye. It makes you wonder how we must not demonize a whole people when we disapprove of what one misguided government is doing.

It also makes you wonder how we here can take a kind of moral high ground in shipping out weapons to Ukraine, in offering a limited welcome to Ukrainian refugees, at the same time as shipping others out to the middle of Africa.

It makes you wonder. Hatred is dangerous for lots of people.

## *Saturday*

I have been speaking in the last three days about a progress, a trajectory, which moves from love on Maundy Thursday, to hate on Good Friday, back to love tonight for this Vigil of Easter. Or rather, not back exactly, but to a love which is extended, renewed, or goes global or even cosmic.

So let's be clear about this love: it's not just a romantic or sentimental love, but it includes those two, as well as a more erotic love. It encompasses too kindness, compassion and the tough love we have to resort to occasionally, a love that takes risks. It is personal and intimate, but also more generalized. It is a force for good and a gift of the Spirit, as St Paul so well describes: If I speak in the tongue of men or of angels ... in the KJV.

The resurrection of Jesus is the triumph of that love, it is the primacy of love over hate, of good over evil.

In the first instance, it is the immediate circle of family and disciples who witness the resurrection. But there is also an ancient tradition which imagines the resurrected Christ going down into the place of the dead, addressing Adam as the archetypal human being and bringing him out of hell: Awake O sleeper and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.

The resurrection event, whatever that means, provided the catalyst for a religious revival around the Mediterranean basin; and St Paul again speak about the whole creation groaning in its anticipation of the Spirit, where the resurrection provides meaning for the entire cosmos.

Our very recent history of pandemic, our witnessing of the horrors of war again in Europe, the casual disregard of our own government to law or human decency, provoke a difficult challenge to that triumph of love, that primacy of resurrection. But this is where faith comes in – we are not bidden to be successful only faithful. And if some of the time we hang onto that faith with our fingertips alone, that's enough to be able to say: Alleluia, Christ has risen, he is risen indeed, alleluia!