

Easter Homily March 2015 – Anne Ralston

We are Easter people!

We believe - no we *know*, we have bet our lives on this - that Jesus died, really died on the Cross - and rose again into indestructible Life, and is living that Life here and now in us...

Is there objective proof for this extraordinary claim?

No - we have traditions, we have an empty tomb, we have near-death experiences - but no absolute certainty.

So then?

Firstly, show me the human being who could ever have imagined the impossible and yet totally real person revealed in Jesus, God-in-human...

Utterly human - and yet utterly dependent on Abba (I do always and only what I *see* Abba doing!) Living in total sub-mission to the Love of Abba.

Born into a poor working-class family, in a minor tribal collection in the middle East, ridiculed by those who were supposed to be learned, no place to lay his head, dying like a slave on a cross - and then rising to what? Not a spectacular revelation to the whole world, but to a few frightened men and women, commissioning these same weak and fearful people to do the impossible - go out into the world without any kind of weaponry or power - and *live love!*

Mary and her companions running from fear of the empty tomb and towards the apostles - for love's sake... Peter baptising Cornelius in the face of his own fears and prejudices - for love's sake...

Jesus has to be real because he is so impossible to imagine! Because he not only calls *us* to live the impossible but also enables us to do it. *He lives!*

He lives with us and in us through all ages, here and now...

Secondly, all through the centuries since then, there have been many courageous, wise, beautiful, loving, so-called ordinary people just like you and me, who given their lives for this, died for this, even today, rather than betray Jesus who is our Brother, Companion, Lover, Healer... Latterly the Yazidi christians, murdered by Isis fanatics. They encourage us in the darkest moments - if they can do it, so can we.

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Never once-off and finished, it is a continual choice to repeat the turning every day, every moment, in all that we think and say and do. We turn and re-turn, from the shadow of independence-from-God, open and re-open ourselves again and again, to the Light of God's Face. We die - and new life flows in us.

Just as Jesus submits Himself to Abba - His Father/Mother and our Father/Mother, in Spirit's Love, so do we sub-mit ourselves to the madness of trusting Jesus - and daily we rise to renewed life as we discover a spring of eternal summer within us, light focussed in our hearts and radiating from our hearts to all we meet.

Submit is *not* kowtowing...It is to freely "place, to *send* myself under" the hands of the one in whom I trust - it is to place myself within the embrace of blessing and being-cared-for, just as Jesus submits himself to Abba. On the Cross and in Resurrection and always. Where there is this submission, love abounds.

Day by day, Jesus shows us wholly and completely what this involves...

Jesus IS the Way, the Truth, the Light - we re-turn *with* him, *in* him, *through* him to Abba and to the ways of Abba in the world... Again and again and again.

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How *can* we live this day by day? Live in the Light of God's Face?

Augustine said to us, a few weeks ago - look around you and see God's face...Is it as simple as that?

We turn to one another - and turn to the Light of God's Face? Impossible!

All our beautiful, funny, strange, peculiar faces...

Never!!!

But it is precisely that!

It is the Good News of the Resurrection that shines on *your* face, on *my* face!

That heals through *my* presence, *your* presence.

We embody His Resurrection when we open *ourselves* to His Light illuminating the dark moments of our life, when we share it with others simply by be-ing with them, "when we smile with those who smile and weep with those who weep, when we accompany those who are sad and at risk of losing hope, when we stay quietly with those who are searching for meaning and joy,"

(Pope Frances, Easter 2015), when we are *present*, to God and to our sisters and brothers, embodying in our lives - "Jesus died and is risen!"

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We live with the *life* of Jesus, even as we die daily for love's sake in so many ways. Death is not the big deal we mostly believe it to be...Death is everywhere, part and parcel of any material world which is of necessity transitory.

Our experience of death right now, is often ugly, frightening, obscene - lion tearing impala, man cutting off another man's head, cancer riddling the bodies of animals and humans, family including 9-year-old child beaten to death by thugs...but this is not the whole truth.

Truth is, we are called to live *life*, not spend our life fearing death. Death itself is simply birth into a new level of life. Every human being, at death, falls nowhere but into the hands of God...

Our deaths *and* our lives are hidden with Christ in God. Day by day we "fill up what is wanting in the passion of Christ, for the healing of the world." (St Paul) With Jesus, we are profoundly engaged in *birthing* the new creation that He is calling into being through Himself..."The whole of creation is groaning in one great act of giving birth!" (St Paul)

Life/Light is everywhere:

Fledglings on Val's balcony, new blades of grass pushing up through dry earth, young leaves suddenly greening all over "dead" fuschia, fullblown bromeliad redhead exploding out of leafy cup of water, new species of creature suddenly discovered where there were none before...

Township entrepreneurs - young people bent on trying to change their communities for the better - Wandisile who founded the 19 Gangster Museum, Buntu and Ayanda who run Sporting Code outside school hours, Department of Coffee offering barista training in Khayelitsha, Yondela's Shack Fusion Kitchen in Stellenbosch, Karen Hendricks and

her team of bakers in Guguletu - and many older people too, like a 50-year-old single mother, holding down two jobs in order to put her son through university...
New life burgeoning.

Let's look around us and open our eyes to see - really see. Not blinded by the negative reports that fill our daily newspapers. They do reflect reality and we must not turn away from all that suffering. We have to hold this in our hearts, enabling life to flow where death seems to reign. Forgiveness to heal where there is blindness and anger and hatred.

But by no means does our darkness reflect the whole of reality...we *must* open our eyes and discover the numberless unsung heroines and heroes bringing new life to birth around us. We must be bearers of the Hope that Jesus enkindles in our hearts.

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We are

Life from Jesus' life.....

We are

Body of Christ...

We are

Eucharist,

We are

Priests, offering our living selves as Jesus did.

To all those we see as we look around us...

We are

Easter people.

Alleluia!

Anne Ralston – retreat leader Anglican priest (?)
Offered Myers Briggs Workshops at the Centre