

## **Friday (Angela of Foligno, 1502)**

When you put a hot iron in the fire it assumes the very shape and nature of the fire itself: heat, colour, strength influence, for it surrenders itself whole and entire, and not in part, yet it keeps its own substance. Just so, when the perfect fire of divine love joins the soul to God and unites with him. It casts itself into God. When it is changed into God without losing its own substance, its whole existence is altered. Then this love makes itself almost entirely Divine.

## **Scripture ( Colossians 2:9-10,12)**

*In him in bodily form, lives divinity in all its fullness, and in him you, too, find your own fulfilment, in the one who is the head of every sovereign and ruling force. You have been buried with him by your baptism; by which, too, you have been raised up with him by your belief in the power of God who raised him from the dead.*

A group of us meet each Monday to look ahead to the readings. If you would like to read the notes of our discussion, based on the questions below and seeing how the cross and the Resurrection as part of the same journey, please visit [stheleanscrosby.org.uk](http://stheleanscrosby.org.uk), click on Prayer, then 'Thinking outside the pew'.

- Q1    Do you contemplate Jesus on the cross?
- Q2    Were the people who rejected Jesus being reasonable?
- Q3    How could Jesus have shown that he was the Son of God?
- Q4    When Jesus died, did he know where God was?

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## **Easter Week**

### **Jesus is risen, and is coming to meet you**

*Each year, I find that the various stages of the Easter Vigil make it easy to be prayerful and joyful. More than that, the symbolism and the readings, in taking us from darkness into light, reveal the significance of the empty tomb. For too many years I rather restricted this to a matter of Jesus telling me that death is not the end, but right from the first action of the vigil, the resurrection is clearly much more a matter of life. The risen Jesus is revealed as the alpha and the omega – all life begins and ends in him. This is not an abstract idea, as the beautiful words of the exsultet make clear: the night of Christ's Passover liberates us from slavery, we are redeemed: humanity is restored to its full dignity. 'As Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glory, we too might live a new life.' (Romans 6).*

*What exactly is this new life, and will I be living it in the coming days and weeks at work, at home? If I don't, then I am doing what I often do: being prayerful and sincere in church and at times of prayer, but not taking that into normal everyday life. In other words, I am not taking seriously that there is a new life, a new way of thinking and acting.*

*There is no doubt that I am supposed to. St Matthew's account of the first Easter has Jesus appearing to the two women who were present when Jesus was laid in the tomb, but, significantly, only after they have responded – joyfully and filled with awe – to the message given by the angel that Jesus had risen. As they went to tell the apostles, Jesus came to meet them.*

*If I was him, after being so cruelly treated, rejected and abandoned before being killed, I would wash my hands of humanity and 'retire' to heaven. If I did come back, it would be to say to the people 'you thought you won, but you didn't – and now you've blown it.' Fortunately, Jesus' ways are God's ways. He does return and continues to work with his followers. He says to the women that he will meet the apostles – those who, having abandoned him and are now terrified and in hiding, that he will meet them in Galilee, i.e. 'back home', which suggests to me that the resurrection is about a new way of living in my daily life.*

*In the resurrection appearances, Jesus meets people where they are and transforms them: salvation is 'through forgiveness of sins, because of the love of our God', (Luke 1:77-78). This forgiveness is not 'forgive and forget': it is refusing to let our pride and self-centredness, (as opposed to the God-centredness Jesus lived and died by) be an obstacle to living in the new relationship with God, made possible by Jesus.*

*I often read the gospels as though Jesus is basically a good role model, but if I listen to St. Paul and follow the Liturgy of Baptism, we don't follow in Jesus' footsteps, we become united. Sin has been conquered, which means that Jesus has removed all that divides us from him. When he came to meet the women and the apostles, they were transformed. Through the resurrection and the Eucharist, he comes to meet us in our lives with the same intention. Happy Easter.*

Martin Bennett.

## **Monday (From the Easter Proclamation)**

This is our Passover feast, when Christ, the true Lamb, is slain, whose blood consecrates the homes of all believers. This is the night when Christians everywhere, washed clean of sin, and freed from all defilement, are restored to grace and grow together in holiness. Father, how wonderful your care for us! How boundless your merciful love! To ransom a slave, you gave away your son. The power of this holy night dispels all evil, washes guilt away, restores lost innocence, brings mourners joy; it casts out hatred, brings us peace, and humbles earthly pride. Night truly blessed when heaven is wedded to earth and we are reconciled to God.

## **Scripture (Romans 6:3-11)**

*When we were baptised into Christ Jesus, we were baptised into his death. So by our baptism into his death we were buried with him, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glorious power, we too should begin living a new life; realising that our former self has been crucified with him, so that the self that belonged to sin should be destroyed and we should be freed from the slavery of sin. Now, the life that he leads is life with God. In the same way you must see yourselves as being dead to sin but alive for God in Jesus Christ.*

## **Tuesday (Cardinal Basil Hume.)**

New life has been given to us. We received it first at Baptism. That life made St. Paul say 'I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me.' Bold words but full of significance. We must not think of Christ rising from the dead and then leaving us to cope as best we can, to live as he taught us how. No, he remains with us, present always, unseen by the eyes and beyond the touch of the hand. Through our faith we come to realise more and more his presence within us and around us. Jesus Christ lives. We draw strength not from ourselves and our own resources but from faith and union with Jesus Christ.

## **Scripture (Ezekiel 36: 18-28)**

*The Lord Yahweh says this: 'I am going to display the holiness of my name which you have profaned among the nations. And the nations will know that I am Yahweh when in you I display my holiness before their eyes. I shall pour clean water over you and you shall be cleansed; I shall cleanse you of all your filth and of all your foul idols. I shall give you a new heart, and put a new spirit in you. I shall remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you a heart of flesh instead. I shall put my spirit in you and make you keep my laws, and respect and practise my judgments.*

## **Wednesday (Caryll Houselander)**

I was in an underground train, a crowded train in which all sorts of people jostled together, sitting and strap-hanging – workers of every description going home at the end of the day. Quite suddenly I saw Christ in them all: living in them, dying in them, rejoicing in them, sorrowing in them. I came out into the street and walked for a long time in the crowds. It was the same here, on every side, in every passer-by – Christ.

## **Scripture (Mt 28:5-10)**

*The angel said to the women "There is no need for you to be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen as he said he would. Come and see the place where he lay, then go quickly and tell his disciples' He has risen from the dead and now he is going before you to Galilee; it is there you will see him!' Filled with awe and great joy the women came quickly away from the tomb and ran to tell the disciples."*

## **Thursday (Sheila Cassidy)**

We rush about, examining the discarded shroud, looking behind the bushes, completely ignoring the patient angel who says 'Why are you looking among the dead for someone who is alive?' The rising of Christ in the Spirit and in whatever form his *new* body took, his descent among the dead and his harrowing of hell are central to our faith. Even more important, and for me totally breath-taking, is the image of the wedding of earth with heaven, the union of frail human beings with their immortal, unknowable God.

## **Scripture (Isaiah 54:7-10)**

*I did forsake you for a brief moment, but in great compassion I shall take you back. In a flood of anger, for a moment, I hid my face from you. But in everlasting love I have taken pity on you, says Yahweh, your redeemer. So now I swear never to be angry with you and never to rebuke you again. For the mountains may depart, the hills be shaken, but my faithful love will never leave you and my covenant of peace with you will never be shaken.*