**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.***

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***Easter Week***

 ***Jesus: risen and waiting to meet you when you get home***

***The early appearance of Easter eggs in the shops always takes me back to my early Lents of giving up sweets, and particularly to the sense of elation on Easter Sunday, where the feeling of ‘thank God that’s over’ was much stronger than any religious fervour. Thinking about it, for many years that was pretty much my understanding of Easter Sunday – the ‘happy ending’ after the horrors of Good Friday. I remember being taught that Jesus’ rising was our guarantee that death was not the end and that now we could go to heaven (terms and conditions apply!), but I had little or no understanding of how dramatically and fundamentally our daily lives are changed by the Resurrection, as revealed in the symbolism and the readings of the Easter vigil.***

***Beginning with the lighting of the Easter candle to dispel the darkness, we celebrate the victory of ‘light’ over ‘darkness’, which the words of the Exsultet explain as Christ’s Passover liberating us from slavery – we are redeemed: humanity is restored to its full dignity. What we are redeemed from (liberated from) is revealed through the readings which begin with the Creation of our beautiful world and all it’s potential, and with us being made in God’s image, to be partners with him in the Covenant, first established with Abraham. The readings which tell the story of love offered by God, of regular betrayal by his people, and equally regular forgiveness by God. Our refusal to be open to God’s ways and rejecting his love, preferring the more short-sighted, futile self-interest of living within our limits comes to a crisis point on the cross... and God keeps on loving.***

***In the final Old Testament reading, (Ezekiel 36), God promises that he will reveal the holiness of his name, (i.e. the fullness of his nature) when he puts a ‘new heart’ into his people so that (finally!) he will be at the centre of all they do, and they will live in partnership with him.***

***The refusal to stop loving on the cross when we utterly reject him, and the Resurrection is how we are liberated. ‘As Christ was raised from the dead by the Father’s glory, we too might live a new life.’ (Romans 6). Given how quickly my life returns to normal each year, it seems that the new life on offer doesn’t penetrate too deeply – it isn’t written on the heart. Perhaps I share the apostles’ reaction to the news the women bring about Jesus being alive: that’s nonsense! If I could make sense of it, I would have reduced the whole mystery to something I could understand.***

***I can respond to the Resurrection in three ways: reject as nonsense, as do many people who regard only what can be proved or explained as ‘real’; I can reject it in a more subtle way by viewing it as an historical event which happened to Jesus, viewing him as something of an exception to the human rule; or I can accept it as ‘nonsense’, leading me to turn to God to ask for the grace to live the new life.***

***At the tomb, the women were told to go and tell the apostles to meet Jesus in Galilee, i.e. ‘back home’, which suggests to me that the resurrection is about a new way of living my daily life. 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, (the fears and limits, the ‘go it alone life which shuts out God, as seen in Holy Week and the Old Testament readings) has been conquered: we are united with the living God—now that does seem like powerful nonsense! I will need the whole of the Easter season to begin to live with this. 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.***