

11 April 'Comfort my People' REFLECTIONS - Holy Saturday

A PERSONAL EASTER TESTIMONY

Every person suffers. None escapes all the time. Everyone is confronted with a couple of questions. What should I do in this situation? Why is there so much evil and suffering? And why did this happen to me? Why the coronavirus pandemic?

Easter provides the Christian answer to suffering and living. Christians are monotheists who developed from within the Jewish revelation; they too follow the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They believe that nearly 2000 years ago a young Jew was crucified on a hilltop in Jerusalem, one Friday afternoon, despised and rejected. Everyone saw him die, while a limited number, those with faith, saw him after a miraculous bodily resurrection on the next Sunday. The claim is not that Jesus' soul goes marching on. It was a return of his entire person from death, breaking the rules of health and physics, as Christians believe this young man was the only Son of God, divine, the Messiah. Jesus' bones will never be found. To the dismay of many this was a Messiah, who was not a great monarch like David or Solomon, but Isaiah's suffering servant, who redeems us, enables us to receive forgiveness and enter into a happy eternity.

"Behold the wood of the cross on which hangs the Saviour of the World."

The sexual abuse crisis damaged thousands of victims. From many points of view the crisis is also bad for the Catholic Church, but we have painfully cut out a moral cancer and this is good. So too some would see COVID-19 as a bad time for those who claim to believe in a good and rational God, the Supreme Love and Intelligence, the Creator of the universe. And it is a mystery; all suffering, but especially the massive number of deaths through plagues and wars.

And many, most understand the direction we are heading when it is pointed out that the only Son of God did not have an easy run and suffered more than his share. Jesus redeemed us and we can redeem our suffering by joining it to His and offering it to God.

I have just spent 13 months in jail for a crime I didn't commit, one disappointment after another. I knew God was with me, but I didn't know what He was up to, although I realised He has left all of us free. But with every blow it was a consolation to know I could offer it to God for some good purpose like turning the mass of suffering into spiritual energy.

The roots of our health services are deeply rooted in the Christian tradition of service, their continuing work of long hours and with a lively danger of infection. Today, too often the irreligious want to eliminate the cause of the suffering, through abortion, euthanasia, or exclude it from sight, leaving our loved ones unvisited in nursing homes. Christians see Christ in everyone who suffers — victims, the sick, the elderly — and are obliged to help.

That is part of the Easter message of the Risen Christ

George Cardinal Pell

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