

An Easter Reflection

Bishop Brian writes about the Easter season.

THE accounts in the Gospels of the Raised Christ encountering the disciples are more than accounts of the disciples' experiences. These accounts suggest ways in which disciples of all ages may be met by the Raised Christ to draw us out of fears that lock us away inside ourselves, or to assure us so that we are not devastated by grief, or to make clear to us how we may know that God has acted decisively in Jesus defeating the strangle-hold of death over humankind.

I suggest that we reflect upon the appearances of the Raised Christ as templates for our own possible experience. These stories of the disciples' surprising experiences can give us a grid for examining our own experience and being able to recognize those moments when the continuing ministry of the Raised Christ through the Holy Spirit encountered us.

I speak of 'the Raised Christ' because the New Testament makes it clear that God the Father raised Jesus from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus is God validating the life, passion and ministry of Jesus. The Resurrection is God the Father's 'yes' to Jesus.

My contention is that the ministry of the Raised Christ is not locked away in the past but contemporary with us. The great affirmations (three times in the Gospel of Matthew) that God is with us in Jesus assure us that the ministry of Jesus is continuous.

I remember a sermon preached by Archbishop Marcus Loane in which he said (of the healing of the paralysed man), "What Jesus could do for one man at one time, he can do for all at all times."

Archbishop Loane stated a principle that has encouraged me greatly. This principle –that the Gospels are not classic biographies but declarations of the character of God sufficiently disclosed for us in Jesus – provides us with an interpretive key to our own experience.

In other words, we too can be surprised by unexpected moments in which we recognise that the Raised Christ is ministering to us either directly or indirectly through others or through circumstances.

The clue for me in attending to the ministry of the Raised Christ in my own life and in the lives of other disciples who have graciously shared their stories with me is the sheer aliveness that has been unexpectedly given. This 'aliveness' is a gift from outside myself. It has caught me by surprise. And it has provoked me to awareness of a likeness in my experience with that of those first disciples.

I am grateful for guides whose wisdom has provided me with the capacity to understand the similarity of these graceful moments with the sensitive ministry of the Raised Christ in what we usually refer to as the Easter experiences. I have grown to appreciate more and more that those who commit themselves to God through Jesus Christ are Easter people – they do experience an aliveness that is Christ-given.

An insightful theologian, Bishop John Taylor, wrote, "Easter is the aliveness of Jesus now, the aliveness of Jesus given to those who need him. Resurrection is eternally now. It is here because it is Him."

The Church never lets us be outside Easter, even when we are in Lent or Christmass. In the Eucharist (an Easter feast) the Great Thanksgiving Prayer rehearses the saving act of God through Jesus, celebrating his death and resurrection. We of course need the other seasons to gain perspective on the Resurrection, but Resurrection is the substance of who we are as Christians.

Easter is always. That needs to be our perspective as we live day by day, even with great difficulties or trials. We live through these with an Easter perspective and assurance.