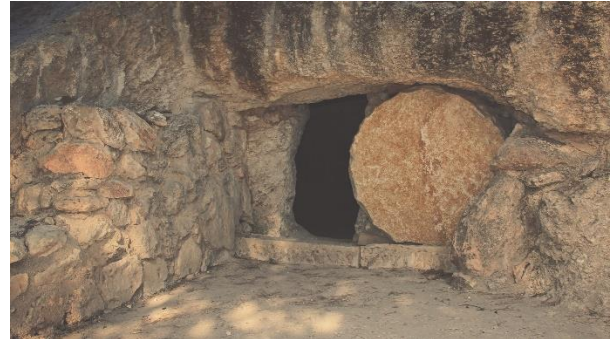


A Reflection for Easter Sunday (4th April 2021)

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*Ye have kept your choicest wine –
Let it flow for heavenly mirth;
Pluck the harp and breathe the horn:
Know ye not 'tis Easter morn? [\('Easter' by
Gerard Manley Hopkins\)](#)*



'Easter Day!' just the sound of it is joyful and gladdens the heart. It signals change, Spring cannot be stopped from breaking through to achieve her transformation.

Easter Day in childhood was: new clothes going to church; altars decked in yellow and white; daffodils and Easter lilies; eggs, hard-boiled and painted; picnics and a visit to granny for chocolate. Unlike Christmas, in mid-winter, there were competing interests – club or county football matches, historical commemorations of the Easter when “a terrible beauty was born”, and an end to the Lenten pause on dances and weddings.

Later, celebrating Easter in time of war was a challenge to faith, amid destruction, hunger, displaced people, misery and death. When words were empty, even repugnant, a paradox of 'exultet'; proclamation of light for the world, the Risen one, in face of unending suffering. What Easter? How Easter?

The markings of the Easter candle ground us in time: “Alpha and Omega, all time belongs to him and all the ages!” The year is etched on the candle. Each is different. How can we forget Easter 2020 and the shocking loss of an octave of our much-loved sisters and brothers? The death and resurrection of the Lord happening, unfolding in our time, in our life, here and now.

This is our second year to be locked down – or up, or in – to celebrate Easter! Consigned to the screen for meeting, working and worship. A virtual gathering, another paradox, observing the ritual, with our online community. A spiritual gogglebox where we can flick from church to church.

If there is a time for every purpose, this time allowed us to befriend ourselves again, to reflect on what is essential, to accept limitations, and appreciate those who live restricted lives. Anecdotally, it is reported to have brought prayer back into homes at Christmas, for local funerals, and just to link with the parish on Sunday. Others were frustrated, and hungered for participation in their communities. Communion, for some, has no substitute. Easter, like the Spring flowers, bursts open demanding attention, 'Celebrate me!' 'Alleluia!'

Easter Day is not just a comfort to soften the hard truth of human frailty and the profound sorrow in the nature of things, but it is the lens for reading the human story. Today's Gospel text is from John but echoes something common to all the resurrection accounts: *Till this moment they had failed to understand* (Jn 20:9); An insightful moment when perspective is completely altered, and what has been painful is experienced now as redemptive. A realisation that no singular event or happening captures completeness. Something is always left to fulfil.

Life's dissatisfaction can be deeply personal, perhaps consumed with grief, or disappointed with the trajectory of one's life, experiencing only pain and fragmentation. Or it can be dissolution with the bigger waves of unfolding history. What is happening to the world? To the Church? To my people or my family? The Easter insight and perspective, as we see in the Acts of the Apostles, enables the disciple to recognise God in the disjointed and discordant sequence of life. *Now we are those witnesses.* (Acts 10:39)

To watch Pope Francis, in an inter-religious and ecumenical moment, praying recently for the revival of life, of trust, of community and of faith, among the ruins of Mosul on the banks of the Tigris, from the cradle of God's people, was an Easter moment of our time, in this year as marked on the candle. An image that changed perspective and enabled, for a moment, the world to imagine transformed life, resurrection! *He saw and he believed.* (Jn 20:8).

Gather gladness from the skies;

Take a lesson from the ground;

Flowers do ope their heavenward eyes

And a Spring-time joy have found;

Earth throws Winter's robes away,

Decks herself for Easter Day. ('Easter' by Gerard Manley Hopkins)