

GRIST

Diocese of New Ulm Social Concerns Office April, 2011

Reflections on Easter

In my tradition, an immunity system exists from the beginning. God is irremediably on the side of life, creates life from inert dust, cherishes life, finally sends an embassy of life, a very Son. A true blood brother.
Daniel Berrigan, S.J.

Now the green blade riseth from the buried grain
Wheat that in the dark earth many days hath lain
Love lives again that with the dead had been
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green

In the grave they laid him, Love whom we had slain
Thinking that never he would wake again
Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green

Forth he came at Easter like the risen grain
He that for three days in the grave had lain
Quick from the dead my risen Lord is seen
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green

When our hearts are wintry, grieving in pain
Thy touch can call us back to life again
Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green
John Crum

We are all conceived in close prison; in our mothers' wombs, we are close prisoners all; when we are born, we are born but to the liberty of the house; prisoners still, though within larger walls; and then all our life is but a going out to the place of execution, to death. Now was there ever any man seen to sleep in the cart, between Newgate and Tyburn? Between the prison and the place of execution, does any man sleep? And we sleep all the way; from the womb to the grave we are never thoroughly awake; but pass on with such dreams and imaginations as these, I may live as well, as another, and why should I die, rather than another? But awake, and tell me, says this text *Quis homo?* Who is that other that thou talkest of? *What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?*

John Donne

As a great sacrament [the Church] extends in space and time the physical body of the Lord. It is not a mere pointer to the absent Christ, but the symbolic manifestation of the present Christ. The members of the Christ, insofar as they are remade in Christ's image by the power of the Holy Spirit, represent Christ to one another and to the world. He identifies himself with them. Especially is this true of the saints, those who allow themselves to be totally transformed in Christ. The church, in its most basic reality, is a holy redeemed fellowship built up through the self-communication of the triune God.
Avery Dulles, S.J.

A pilgrimage is a journey undertaken in the light of a story. A great event has happened; the pilgrim hears the reports and goes in search of the evidence, aspiring to be an eyewitness. The pilgrim seeks not only to confirm the experience of others firsthand but to be changed by the experience. Pilgrims often make the journey in company, but each must be changed individually; they must see for themselves, each with his or her own eyes. As they return to ordinary life the pilgrims must tell others what they saw, recasting the story in their own terms.
Paul Elie

History says, "Don't hope on this side of the grave." But then, once in a lifetime, the longed-for tidal wave of justice can rise up, and hope and history rhyme. So hope for a great sea-change, on the far side of revenge. Believe that a further shore is reachable from here.
Seamus Heaney

The Passover Seder is a joyful but serious religious service. Its locus is the miraculous deliverance of the Children of Israel from Egyptian bondage, through peril and in the face of impossible odds, to the gifts of divine sustenance in the wilderness (the quails and manna) and of divine wisdom (the Law) at Mount Sinai – a sustenance, therefore, of the body and soul – and at last into the freedom and beatitude of the Holy Land. This pilgrimage represents the spiritual journey from darkness into light that we all must try to make in the course of our lives. Its shape is that of a dramatic and miraculous narrative; and for both educative and spiritual reasons (which are never far

apart) it seems important that the excitement and wonder of the story itself, the events that happened on that night which make it different from all other nights – and not only the events of that night but of the entire deliverance – should not be lost sight of. The rejoicing that ends the service is plausible only if all the preceding events are fully realized – not just the pain and humiliation of bondage but the difficulties and excitement of deliverance. So the service ends not only in joy but also in clarification: a movement from darkness to light – we understand what we had not known, or had forgotten, or had neglected, or had misunderstood before.

Anthony Hecht

While the fashions might change, the fundamental ingredients for a funeral [remain] the same – someone who has quit breathing forever, some others to whom it apparently matters, and someone else who stands between the quick and dead and says something like, “Behold, I show you a mystery.”

Thomas Lynch

Life in Christ...is a seeking into the meaning of human behavior which involves a constant reaching out beyond the values of the world. Sin consists in ceasing to reach out, refusing to respond to the Father's summons, and settling for this present world. What makes it possible for us to reach out, to hear and respond to the summons, is that through the resurrection of Christ the future world is already with us as a disruptive force disturbing the order of the world. We are able to some extent to live into the mode of communication that belongs to the future world, the mode we call charity or the presence of the Spirit. Of course trying to live in the present world a life in accordance with the future is a dangerous business, as Jesus found out. The Christian may expect to be crucified with him.

Herbert McCabe, O.P.

[Dorothy Day's] funeral was on December 2, 1980, at the Nativity Catholic Church. An hour before the service people began to assemble in the street. There were American Indians, Mexican workers, blacks and Puerto Ricans. There were people in eccentric dress, apostles of causes who had felt a great power and truth in Dorothy's life...At the appointed time, a procession of these friends and fellow Catholic Workers came down the sidewalk. At the head of it Dorothy's grandchildren carried the pine box that held her body. Tamar (her daughter), Forster (Tamar's father) and Dorothy's brother John Day followed. At the church door, Cardinal Terence

Cooke met the body to bless it. As the procession stopped for this rite, a demented person pushed his way through the crowd and bending low over the coffin peered at it intently. No one interfered, because, as even the funeral directors understood, it was in such as this man that Dorothy had seen the face of God.

William Miller

Nothing which is true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore, we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore, we are saved by love. No virtuous act is quite as virtuous from the standpoint of our friend or foe as it is from our standpoint. Therefore, we must be saved by the final favor of love, which is forgiveness.

Reinhold Niebuhr

[On the one hand, Wittgenstein said, “I cannot utter the word ‘Lord’ with meaning. Because I do not believe that he will come to judge me; because that says nothing to me. And it could say something to me, only if I lived completely differently.” On the other hand...] What inclines even me to believe in Christ's Resurrection? It is as though I play with the thought: If he did not rise from the dead, then he decomposed in the grave like any other man. *He is dead and decomposed.* In that case he is a teacher like any other and can no longer *help*; and once more we are orphaned and alone. So we have to content ourselves with wisdom and speculation. We are in a sort of hell where we can do nothing but dream, roofed in, as it were, and cut off from heaven. But if I am to be REALLY saved, – what I need is *certainty* – not wisdom, dreams or speculation – and this certainty is faith. And faith is faith in what is needed by my *heart*, my *soul*, not my speculative intelligence. For it is my soul with its passions, as it were with its flesh and blood, that has to be saved, not my abstract mind. Perhaps we can say: Only *love* can believe the Resurrection. Or: It is *love* that believes the Resurrection. We might say: Redeeming love believes even in the Resurrection; holds fast even to the Resurrection. What combats doubt is, as it were, *redemption*. Holding fast to *this* must be holding fast to that belief. So what that means is: first you must be redeemed and hold on to your redemption (keep hold of your redemption) – then you will see that you are holding fast to this belief. So this can come about only if you no longer rest your weight on the earth but suspend yourself from heaven. Then *everything* will be different and it will be ‘no wonder’ if you can do things that you cannot do now.

Ludwig Wittgenstein