

For Monday of Holy Week 6 4 20

Hello everyone! I'm recording this for the beginning of HW 2020. The poet T. S. Eliot wrote a poem called: The Journey of the Magi. In it one of the Magi recalls his journey in search of the infant Jesus. With the other Magi, he eventually found Jesus, and on their return home, by a different route for fear of Herod, he reflected on all that had happened, and wondered what it all meant. He asked: 'Were we led all that way for Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly.' But there were implications to that Birth, that new life, which meant Death to many things, like strife and hate and old debate: death to everything that is less than love.

Our present predicament with regards to Covid-19 is such a trial, and everyone is feeling it tough, as we go through this process of adjusting. It impacts on every aspect of our lives; and we feel so helpless. We are pared back to the essentials, and we are asking ourselves the big questions about life and death, the common good, and the purpose of life. Perhaps the main fact that we are confronted with is that of our own mortality, our frailty, our vulnerability, and our limits, our sheer dependence on one another for any kind of positive outcome from this emergency.

We are so blessed with all who are working on the front line for the common good on our behalf in Ireland at this time, medical staff, carers, scientists and experts, politicians and so many others. They are an inspiring group of people, and the national response from us, the people, to the stringent measures that we have been asked to undertake, is also inspiring and hopeful. Our efforts are making a difference. We are looking after ourselves, and we are looking after each other. We can be proud of the way we have come together as Team Ireland in response to Ireland's Call at this time for solidarity. It augurs good for the future, when we will emerge from this crisis.

What does Faith have to offer in these difficult circumstances? As people of Faith we are not limited to our own resources only. We have the wonderful treasures of our Faith to call on. These treasures have sustained Irish people and all people down through emergencies in the past. They can do the same again today.

We rightly acknowledge that the challenges before us are great. We can't help but feel that Covid-19 will change our lives in many ways, though we do not yet know in what ways. This emergency will be a life-changing experience for all of us. It won't be business as usual when the restrictions are lifted. Hopefully this grim time will help us all to re-calibrate our lives towards what really matters and is important.

This is the context in which we approach Holy Week this year 2020. It will obviously be a Holy Week like no other we have ever known.

HW as we know, commemorates the last days of Jesus' life on earth. For the person of Faith the last days of Jesus are the key to understanding who Jesus was, and why he was sent.

He was sent to make all things new.

HW begins on Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion and concludes on Easter Sunday. Between these 2 Sundays the main focus is on what's called the Easter Triduum, or 3 Days, Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday night.

The mystery played out here is bigger than we are. It has to do with the transcendent, the beyond, the divine, working on behalf of all humanity.

God is the ultimate and pervasive reality. We humans exist as his gift, as his creation and as his creatures. God created us. We did not create God or ourselves. God created us for happiness. But the history of humanity shows how humans chose another way. Choices made going back to the beginning resulted in a flawed human condition. We refer to this as Original Sin.

Original Sin is the tendency in us towards selfishness, greed, arrogance and violence. Our passions incline us towards evil. Jesus was sent by God the Father on a Mission: to save us from our sins. Jesus fulfilled that Mission during Holy Week. We believe that Jesus' submission to the fate that came his way at the hands of Pilate, for practicing Gospel Values of love, compassion, forgiveness and mercy, which upset the status quo, and his subsequent rescue by God the Father, clears a way for all of us who have Faith in him, to follow, in God's good time, where Jesus has gone, which is towards Resurrection.

Our Baptism connects us to Jesus. Holy Communion nourishes that connection. Confirmation strengthens that connection. HW is where all this comes together.

In the first days of Holy Week, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, the storm brews against Jesus.

Then on Holy Thursday he gathers with his close friends for a Special Meal, giving us the Eucharist and illustrating what Christian Love and Service mean by washing their feet.

On Good Friday we remember Jesus' sacrifice, his suffering and death on the cross.

On Holy Saturday night we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and we renew our Baptismal Promises.

Our Holy Week Liturgies this year will be without a congregation and will be restricted. They will be broadcast on the Parish Webcam. Please spread the word. We will follow the usual timetable, which you'll find on the Website.

How can we have a Happy Easter this year 2020 with the restrictions of Covid-19?

By journeying with Jesus through Holy Week at home, and by knowing that Jesus accompanies us through this time of trial.

So, until next time: Stay at home. Stay connected. Stay apart. This is the sacrifice asked of us in the fight against Covid-19. God bless you all. Slán agus beannacht.