

## Some Thoughts as we prepare for Easter - from Margaret Price, Lay Dean

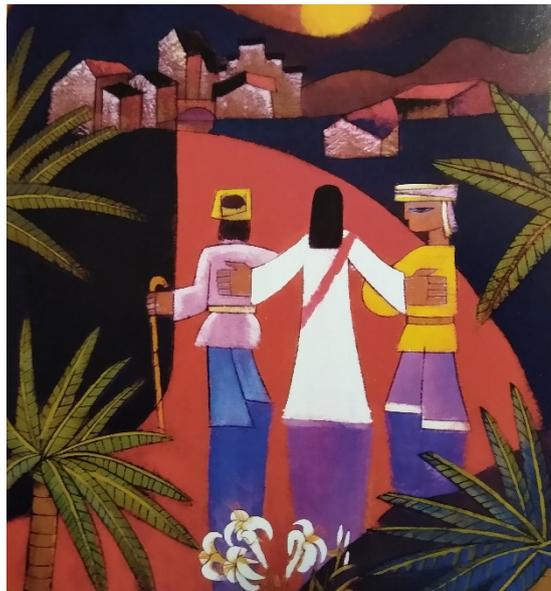
I have always loved springtime and I always seek out the place where I can find the first snowdrop, or the first primrose, or the first wood anemone. After the warm weather of last week we are beginning to see lots of blossoms - the black thorn in the hedgerows and in my garden damson, plum and pear. I just hope that the frost doesn't come to ruin the crop.

Spring is always a time of hope for me, of anticipation, but above all the time of recognising yet again God's wonderful creation that we are part of.

And yet nature can be cruel. Think of the sight of carnivorous animals or fish feeding on their prey. The beautiful pale barn owl that I watched at dusk quartering the field was actually seeking a mouse or vole to eat. Humans, a part of God's creation can be cruel too. We are approaching the main festival of the Christian year, Easter, when we remember on Good Friday how cruel the Roman authorities were who crucified our Lord Jesus Christ. And yet, even out of that cruelty comes great hope - the hope that we have because Jesus overcame that cruelty and rose from the dead on Easter Day.



Sometimes I think we are so familiar with the story of Easter Day that we don't connect with just how amazing Christ's resurrection was. Recently I was reading a book by the theologian Alister McGrath on the Resurrection (2007 SPCK). He asked his reader to think about the way in which a seed germinates and brings forth a new plant.



At the Christian after school club in Stillington the children recently did that lovely experiment of placing a broad bean against a bit of blotting paper in the jar so that we could watch this happening - first the small root, then more strands on the root, then a stalk, then leaves unfurling on the stalk and finally flowers so that the cycle was complete. He was suggesting that just as we take this miracle of nature for granted so we risk, as Christians, being far too complacent about Christ's resurrection; not understanding the mind-blowing experience of the first disciples when they met the risen Christ. It came as a shock, they were terrified. It was something that they were not expecting. Each chapter of the book is based around a picture and I particularly liked this one to illustrate the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13 - 35). The Chinese artist He Qi painted this in the 1970s soon after restrictions were lifted on

Christianity and the seeds of faith could grow again in China.

We are living through a very difficult period now with lockdown to try to suppress the transmission of the very contagious Covid-19 virus. Almost all of us have never experienced anything like this before. It is a shock, and we are frightened. So many aspects of our normal life are turned upside down. We are threatened with illness, even death; with the loss of livelihood, with the failure of businesses; with separation from our families and the absence of such a simple thing as a handshake or a hug. And yet out of this very serious situation comes hope. The hope that is generated by the wonderful acts of generosity and kindness from friend and stranger, The hope that is generated by being united against a common enemy. The hope that comes from seeing the dedication of everyone in the health service. I believe that God will lead us through this time of suffering. I trust God to be with us. But I also know when we are rescued, and after all the parties are over we must show the same spirit in building a better world for our children and our children's children.

May you find hope as we celebrate Palm Sunday and enter Holy Week, travelling the dark journey with Our Lord, but celebrating his resurrection on Easter Sunday.

You may find this gentle service of Compline helpful, courtesy of the Revd Nick Bird at Dunnington <http://www.stnicholasdunnington.org.uk/content/media/3022-1585420717.mp3>

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