

WE ARE AN EASTER PEOPLE

A widow had always been indifferent to her husband and really not very nice to him throughout their married life. She never really paid much attention to him while he was alive, but strangely one day she found herself missing him. So, she went to see a psychic to see if she could contact her husband. The psychic went into a trance. An unearthly breeze wafted through the room and suddenly the woman heard the unmistakable voice of her departed husband.

"Honey!", she cried, "Is that you?" "Yes, my dear." "Are you happy?" "Yes, my dear." "Happier than you were with me?" "Oh yes, my dear, much, much happier." "Wow", says the wife, "Then heaven must be an amazing place." Then the husband says, "I'm not in heaven, dear."

I thank God for a sense of humour and it is one of the last things I would want to lose, especially during this coronavirus pandemic. We have lost enough: our intimacy with our loved ones and friends, our social activities, and as Catholics, we now know what it is like to lose our Mass. It will be a strange Holy Week indeed for us all this year. No blessing of palms, no penitential service, no First Holy Communion children having their feet washed at the Mass of the Lord's Supper, no veneration of the Cross on Good Friday and no celebration of the wonderful Easter Vigil. At least I can celebrate Mass privately and pray for everyone. We priests, in our renewal of our priestly commitment during the Chrism Mass at the Cathedral, resolve, "I promise to be a faithful steward of the divine mysteries in the Holy Eucharist, and to carry out faithfully the sacred office of teaching, not seeking any gain, but moved only by zeal for the people I serve." That is what I intend to do this week. But I know that I will not be alone, none of us will.

Remember at Golgotha, that Jesus was stripped of everything and willingly died for us all. We have been stripped of so much, right down to our sacred Mass. The Resurrection could not have happened without the death of Jesus on the Cross. The "death" of our Mass, of our Holy Week in our churches, will bring new hope and new life to us all. The pain of loss that we feel being deprived of our Holy week retreat will be replaced with deep sense of joy and inner peace that this world cannot give. There's a lovely story about Pope Francis. Apparently, when he was Archbishop Bergoglio of Buenos Aires, though committed to the poor, evangelisation and simplicity, but was no superstar. Far from it; he rarely appeared in public; he was shy and boring when he did. This cardinal simply did not sparkle! Over Christmas 2013, nine months after he was elected Pope, he made an appointment with an old South American friend. His friend came into the Pope's modest apartment, and referring to his now exuberant and spontaneous public image, said bluntly, "What happened to you? You're not the same man I knew in Buenos Aires." Pope Francis answered, "On the night of my election, I had an experience of the closeness of God that gave me a great sense of inner freedom and peace and that sense has never left me." I don't think Pope Francis is alone in this kind of experience, though perhaps many people would not admit it, at least, not publicly. But these things do happen and it makes us become more aware of what it means to be an Easter People. These are "resurrection" moments, when we experience a deep, almost intangible inner peace", that certainly has not come from this world! Just as Jesus did not have his Resurrection fan-fared in a blaze of glory for the entire world to see. Rather it was a quiet affair, in the still, soft morning in the Easter garden, where Jesus whispers to Mary Magdalene, "Mary, Mary." So, for us this gentle, yet powerful resurrection will

take place in the silence of our hearts and would only be noticed by those who have the eyes to see and the ears to hear.

It is in this way that we understand that faith, hope, love generosity, sacrifice and beauty are impervious to change and corruption. No pandemic, no disease, no government orders can rob us of the joy and peace that makes us an Easter People, whose song is "Halleluiah."

May I wish each and every one of you and your family and friends a beautiful and blessed Easter and may the peace of the Risen Christ be with you all.

Love,
Andy

PS

A boxer goes to the doctor suffering from terrible insomnia. "Have you tried counting sheep?" suggests the doctor. "No, that doesn't help at all," says the boxer. "Every time I reach nine, I get up."

A man walks into a pub and asks the barman if they have any helicopter flavour crisps. "No," says the barman, "We only have plain."

Q: What do you call a woman who can balance two pints of beer on her head?

A: Beatrix.