

Archbishop's Easter Message

April 2017

Oscar Wilde once famously said “It will all be fine in the end. If it’s not fine, it’s not the end.” Archbishop Charles Halpin, who ordained me here 25 years ago, once told me, I’ve looked at the back of the book, and it all comes out good in the end. From the perspective of Christian hope, a hope grounded in the resurrection, we can trust that time and history are ultimately in God’s hands. But we are not grasping the depths of Christian faith if we go through life with a naive optimism which smiles through suffering saying it’s all going to turn out okay. At least that’s not where the Scriptures or our liturgies lead us. The account of Jesus’ arrest, his passion and death is a story of the suppression of the truth, the shattering of hope, and the victory - albeit short-term victory - of fear, violence, and cruelty.



That reality of suffering is vital for us to keep in sight, because those things still happen in our world, in our lives and the lives of those around us. We still live in a world where greed and selfishness and fear shape many of our personal and societal decisions; a world where the legacy of colonization is tremendous inequality, poverty and enduring racism; where vulnerable people are sexually abused, trafficked or tossed aside; where conflict is too seldom resolved by dialogue, too often by war. And most of us do not stand on innocent ground; we carry some of these wounds ourselves, but in so many ways we are also complicit in the suffering of others. Our world needs, and we need, transformation, redemption.

When the disciples despaired after Jesus was crucified, they didn’t have a script to look at and say it’s going to be okay. And when we suffer, or face injustice, or those around us do, we don’t know how it’s going to turn out. Christian hope isn’t a pair of rose-coloured glasses that makes it all look good anyway. Christian hope is born when God enters into the darkness of the tomb and brings unimaginable light, when God enters into the despair of the human condition, and embraces us in mercy, doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Hope takes shape in our lives when we come to God in our tremendous need, in solidarity with those who suffer in our midst, and ask God to continue to raise the dead to life, to transform hatred into love, to bind our wounds with forgiveness and healing. But when we do so, don’t be surprised that God asks one thing in return: that you, that we, take up the invitation to put our lives at the service of the transforming and redemptive work of the Gospel: bringing light into places of darkness, bearing hope where there is despair, justice where there is greed, peace where there is strife, the balm of God’s mercy where there is suffering.

Christ has risen from the dead, our liturgy proclaims, trampling on death by death. Let us rejoice. But let us also hear anew God’s invitation to follow Jesus, who gives his life out of love. Lord God, make of us bearers of the light, witnessing with integrity to the resurrection in all we say and all we do. Friends, Christ is Risen. He is Risen Indeed. Happy Easter!

Archbishop Donald Bolen