

## Reflection for 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter Year B

Travel restrictions in Scotland lifted on Friday and people can now travel. For many, a huge sigh of relief, as they could now meet up with loved-ones albeit outside. It will be an emotional journey as they may not have met in person for several months. Facetime, texting and zoom calls are all great but they are not quite the same as meeting person to person. We will probably now all appreciate the quality time that we can now spend with friends and family with the hope that over the next few months, the restrictions will gradually be lifted as the vaccine continues to be rolled out across the country. There is a sense of a cautious optimism with the hope that we are slowly going in the right direction. The season of Easter is also a time for cautious optimism in terms, too, of our faith. We have left the season of Lent behind. As a pilgrim people, rooted in the celebration of the Paschal Mystery we can look forward in hope because we are saved by hope in the person of Jesus of Nazareth who give meaning to our lives of faith even, if at times, we are struggling with them. A culture of encounter with a faith rooted in hope can be an authentic and life-giving experience for us as a people of faith. There can be many things that happen to us in life that can thwart or suffocate our lives of faith. Many of us will be able to tell those stories. A life of faith can also be enhanced by a life of prayer. There are times when it is easy to forget that both our faith and our prayer require some nourishment. We need to work at prayer. It can and does demand a lot of effort on our part. It is not an overnight success. It demands patience, courage and a lot of time. The crossroad from the culture of encounter becomes a meeting place for prayer and faith. There is a connectedness that brings them both to life. Faith and prayer begin to shape our map of faith. The contours on our map of faith are the heartbeat that gives life to our faith and prayer. Without a sense of life and energy, these are meaningless and have a sense of emptiness that can no longer offer any real purpose. Easter is the season of new life. It is bright and the season of summer beckons on the horizon for us to gaze on the wonder and beauty of creation that we often ascribe to God. Perhaps these words of Nicholas Lash, an English theologian may encourage us to reflect on the Easter Mystery in the light of faith.

“To talk of the “end” in Christian speech, is to talk of Easter. Easter is both *finis* and *telos*, as terminus and consummation. There is nothing that happens after resurrection, nor anything further to be said. This only makes sense, of course, if that to which the word “Easter” refers is a fact not only about the past from which we learned this language, but also about the present and about our future and the future of all mankind. But Easter would hardly have been, for two thousand years, the spring and centre of Christian life and prayer, would hardly have provided the focus of Christian worship and the form of Christian hope if the “Easter” were simply the name of something that once happened in the past.

To talk of the “end” is to talk of Easter. And this is not, nor can it ever be, an easy thing to do, for what can be truly said of Easter which respects the difference between our un-Eastered world and the God whose self-utterance in that world breaks, will break, and has already broken all the seals of silence - even the silence of death? And what can truly be shown of Easter in such a way as to respect the “second difference” according to which the Spirit is not another utterance or idea, but is redemptive gift, occurrence, transformation, life, relationship, and to do so in a world the darkness and deadliness of which (if taken seriously suffered, and not evaded) at least serves to correct our propensity to collapse giver into gift? Theses seem to me to be at least the kind of questions the poetic and prayerful expression of which would serve as a suitable ending.

It is not true, in fact, that most books begin at page one. They begin farther back, on the cover (which was the first thing that the reader saw) and on the title page.”

Nicholas Lash, “**Easter in Ordinary: Reflections on human experience and the Knowledge of God,**” pages 294/295