An Easter Message

The Right Reverend Cherry Vann, Bishop of Monmouth

A year on from the first lockdown and our celebration of Easter remains necessarily constrained. Many churches remain closed. Numbers are limited in those that are opening. And we’re unable, once again, to sing together those gloriously uplifting Easter hymns. Our Easter services may feel somewhat muted held, as they are, in the context of an ongoing pandemic that still has the potential to instill anxiety, threaten illness and claim lives.

Those of us who are used to being able to celebrate Easter without restriction feel the loss acutely. But for some of our sisters and brothers across the world, this is how it is year on year. Easter is proclaimed amidst famine, grinding poverty, the threat of arrest, persecution and war.

We may pause this year to reflect that our temporary restrictions and the experience of pain and loss we’ve felt in not being able to meet for worship, sing our hymns, receive the sacrament is nothing compared to what countless Christians have to live with as an ongoing day to day reality.

But perhaps our present, if temporary, reality can help us enter into the message of Easter more deeply. For the new and everlasting life we proclaim at Easter was wrought for us out of death; Jesus’s horrific death by crucifixion. Love proved to triumph over all that hatred and evil could throw at it. Through Christ’s agony and desolation of the most harrowing kind, he offers to us peace and joy that can withstand the worst.

For some, of course, COVID or no COVID, pain and suffering, loss and despair, a sense of helplessness and hopelessness is and has been their reality. And, for all of us, such experiences can be part and parcel of our lives at some point or other.

Good Friday and Easter Day go hand in hand. One is not possible without the other. Easter calls us to trust that whatever we are going through there is light – light that shines in the darkness and which not even the deepest darkness can overwhelm: a theme depicted beautifully in the Easter card I’ve sent out this year.

We’ve seen this light in the darkness in action over the past 12 months and more, both in the news but also in our own network of family and friends. In all the bleakness, despair and awfulness, there have been acts of selflessness, sacrifice, heroism even, that have touched our hearts, inspired us and given us hope. Those lights have shone so brightly because of the darkness we’ve been living through.

Easter proclaims that this is the way of love. This is the way of God and God’s way of working in and through the lives his children. And we’re called not just to celebrate it, but to discover the deepest truths of it by living it, whatever our circumstances. Because love burst from the tomb that first Easter Day, triumphing over all that evil could throw at it, as it does today; bringing joy and hope and peace without end.

May you know in your hearts the love, hope and joys of Easter. For,

Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!