



Holy Saturday

11th April 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

I'm more than a little concerned that, despite the many appreciative messages of encouragement I have received, you have been a captive audience for my thoughts all Holy Week! Today, it feels a timely opportunity, if you've not met his spiritual work already, to introduce you to one of my all-time theological and spiritual guides: John O'Donohue. Sadly, John died in 2008, at the far too young age of 52, but nonetheless managed to pack a huge amount into his years on earth as an Irish Poet, Author, Priest, and Hegelian philosopher!

These are his reflections for Good Friday, which seem appropriate to share this Holy Saturday, as we sit in the shadow of Jesus' death - locked down, just as the disciples He loved found themselves that fateful Sabbath.

With my love, in the Passion of Christ,

Jax

Revd Jax Machin, Rector, The Downs Benefice

Good Friday Reflection by John O'Donohue

Taken from his book, Eternal Echoes



The Cross is a unique axis in time. It is where time and timelessness intersect.

All past, present, and future pain were physically carried up the Hill of Calvary in this Cross. This darkness is carried up the hill so that it could face the new dawn of Resurrection and become transfigured. In essence, the Cross and the Resurrection are one thing. They are not subsequent to each other. The Resurrection is the inner light hidden at the heart of darkness in the Cross. On Easter morning, this light explodes onto the world. This is the mystery of the Eucharist.

The Eucharist is a fascinating place; it embraces Calvary and Resurrection within the one circle. In Christian terms, there is no way to light or glory except through the sore ground under the dark weight of the Cross. The Cross is a lonely forsaken symbol. Good Friday is always deeply lonesome. There is an eerie and disturbing sadness at the heart of this day. On Good Friday, the pain of the world is returning to the Cross, awaiting transfiguration again.

The Cross is an ancient symbol. Expressed lyrically, there is cruciform structure to every pain, difficulty, and sadness. In this sense, the Cross is not an external object that belongs far away on a hill in Jerusalem. Rather, the shape of the Cross is internal to the human heart. Every heart has a cruciform shape.

When you look at the different conflicts in your life, you find that they are placed where the contradictions cross each other. At the nerve of contradiction, you have the centre of the Cross, the nail of pain where two intimate but conflicting realities criss-cross. To view the standing Cross is to see how it embraces all directions. The vertical beam reaches from the lowest depth of clay to the highest zenith of divinity, the horizontal beam stretches the breadth of the world.

The promise to each of us is that we will never be called to walk the lonely path of suffering without seeing the footprints ahead of us which lead eventually over the brow of the hill where Resurrection awaits us. Behind the darkness of suffering, a

subtle brightening often manifests itself. Two lines in a poem by Philippe Jaccottet echo this: "Love, like fire, can only reveal its brightness / on the failure and the beauty of burnt wood." There is consolation and transfiguration here. The fires of suffering are disclosures of love. It is the nature of the lover to suffer. The marks and wounds that suffering leave on us are eventually places of beauty. This is the deep beauty of soul where limitation and damage, rather than remaining forces that cripple, are revealed as transfiguration.

Prayer for Holy Saturday

