

RESOURCES FOR HOLY WEEK AND EASTER

PALM SUNDAY:

PALM SUNDAY



I'm not sure what to do with this greenery.
For one frivolous moment
I consider doing a sort of
'dance of the seven palm branches.'
After all, this is a moment of celebration
the likes of which we seldom see
around these parts.
When was the last time?
Ah yes.
Herod with his entourage
making a triumphal entrance into the city,
soaking up the adulation of the crowds.
He, all regal and ramrod straight,
rode a white horse
surrounded by armed guards
to push the peasants aside.
But this king rides a donkey
and is flanked by a motley group,
some of which I recognise as fishermen.
His carriage is not triumphant.
he does not wave regally.
He smiles, but the smile doesn't reach his sad eyes,
as if he can see further along this road,
beyond our vision,
to somewhere lonely and dark
that belies this festivity.
"Hosannah to the Son of David!" we cry,
and mean it.
But will it be sufficient for his journey?

I wave my branches with the rest
until he is close enough to read his face.
He turns his head to meet my eyes
and look deeply into my soul,
and I know what I must do.
I skirt the crowd to get ahead of him
and throw my branches down
to be trodden underfoot,
as he himself will be.
and,
I realise,
where I want to be.
With him.

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25/3/18 (Palm Sunday)

THAT THURSDAY



It was after sunset
that they all met in that upper room.
We women, of course,
had been there for some time
preparing the Passover meal.
Then we sat back
and watched
and listened.
Puzzling conversation,
about servanthood
(well, we knew about that already,
being women)
and being one with him
and with the Father.
Then,
amazingly,

he took a towel and a bowl
and washed the disciples' feet.
Unheard of!
The actions of a slave!
But that was him all over -
always ready to give of himself.
In fact when he broke the bread
and distributed the wine
he said "This is my body and blood!"
as if we could somehow eat,
drink,
absorb him.
How much more could he give of himself?
We were about to find out
in the following dreadful days,
when our skies turned black with grief.
But for the time being
our prepared meal
had become a dreadful banquet
full of love and betrayal.

I vowed that
such a meal I would never eat again.
and yet....
and yet....
with each subsequent breaking of bread,
each taking of the cup,
the memory is relived
with dreadful,
poignant
clarity,
a counterpoint
to the cross
and the tomb
and the rising.

None of these would make sense
except for that meal.

WATCH WITH ME



Lord,
I am not good at heroics.
I can't say that I would die for you
because I don't know.
At least, not yet.
No.
I can only cradle you,
rock you as you sob scalding tears
against my shoulder.
I can only stroke your hair
and let my tears bathe your head.

I cannot say, "There, there, everything will be alright."
Because it won't.
I cannot say, "I know, I know."
Because I don't.

Will my tears
ease the agony of the crown of thorns?
Will my embrace
counter the stretch of tendons pinned out on wood?

I don't know.

All I know
is that in watching with you
your anguish becomes mine,
and mine yours,
and as my tears mingle with yours,
my pain with yours,
together we wear the wounds of the world,
and carry them into the night,
towards the impossible possibility
of resurrection.

GOOD FRIDAY:



THAT FRIDAY

The soldiers wrenched the nails out of him with pliers
and let him down (none too gently).
Joseph of Arimathea had bartered with Pilate for his body,
so we were allowed to begin the preparation.
We prised the crown of thorns out of his flesh and hair
matted with blood,
then stood by to allow his sobbing mother
to wash the blood and grime from his body,
crooning the lullaby she probably would have sung
when she bathed him as a child.
We wanted to allow her all the time in the world
but Sabbath was too close,
so we women helped her with her tender task.
Joseph had brought strips of linen
and we wrapped him in them.
He helped us carry him to the tomb
where, weeping, we laid him,
and then rolled the heavy stone across the entrance.
But even that wasn't good enough for Rome,
because as we turned to go,
some soldiers came to make sure it was properly sealed.
We left them laughing as they shared some macabre joke.
Is that all his life was worth,
to be consigned to a tomb guarded by uncaring soldiers?
Didn't they know?
Couldn't they see?
But the sun was about to set,
and we had to hurry home,
unable to even protest their callousness.
Just before he died he had cried out
"It is finished!"
But for us it was not finished,
and it seemed that our grief was such
that it would never be finished.

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FRAGMENTS

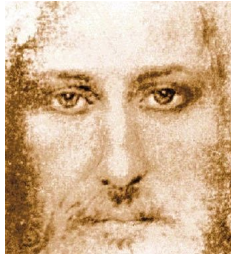


Lord,
you come walking
among the brittle fragments
of our broken lives,
gathering up every sharp shard,
to fashion
a new and beautiful
mosaic.

And all the while
your hands and feet
bleed for love of us.

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VERONICA'S GIFT



My life is woven cloth;
imperfect,
disfigured at times
by unloveliness;
but it is all I have to offer.
And this I do,
tearfully,
only to find it hallowed
by the imprint of your face.

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CRUCIFIX

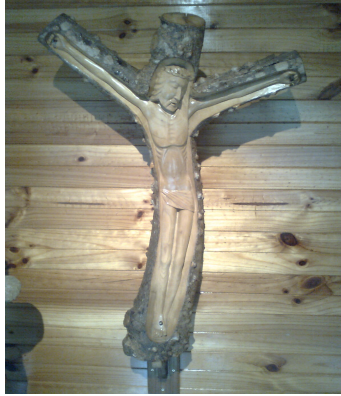


Photo: Crucifix at 'Erimophila'
Little Brothers of Francis,
Tabulam, NSW

Lord,
let me be the wood against which you are crucified.
Let the nails which pierce your hands and feet
be driven into me.
Let me learn your obedience
in the face of death;
your forgiveness
in the midst of horror.
Let my arms stretch out with yours
to gather the whole world
into your loving embrace.
Amen.

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AT COCK'S CROW



That morning I crowed three times,
one - to protest the intruding noise;
two - to reject the rejection;
three - to herald the new day.

That morning
I thought I was successful
on all three counts.
But there was more to come;
more noise, more rejection
and a sunrise to eclipse all others
two mornings later,
when all the world's darkness
was consumed by this new light and life;
more than I could ever call up
in a lifetime of crowing.

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22/4/18

BLOOD AND BONE



My dad had green fingers.

Mum used to say that
he could grow lilies
on a rubbish dump.

“What’s the secret?”

I asked him one day.

“Blood and bone.” he said,

“Blood and bone.”

and tipped me a wink.

My Father is also

a gardener,

working in wasteland,

making deserts flourish.

“Blood and bone on a rubbish dump.”

he says.

“Blood and bone.

That’s the secret.”

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9/2/16

HOLY SATURDAY:

ACHING PLACE



There is a place,
an aching place.
A nowhere,
neither-here-nor-there place;
longing, liminal.
Into it is gathered all the pain of the world.
It's floor is engraved
with the prayers
of those who have dared
to wait there;
who have reached out
to touch the tears of God.

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23/9/11

EASTER DAY:

THAT SUNDAY



We went there early,
as the sun was struggling
to shed any glimmer of hope
on our grieving world.
How we lived through yesterday's Sabbath
I'll never know.
The call to worship mocked us,
echoing Friday's jeering crowd.
So we huddled together,
women,
by now beyond tears,
grief crushing us
to dry dust.

So there we were,
as we had been on Friday,
Mary, his mother,
Joanna,
and me,
with our sweet smelling,
bitter burden,
to offer our tender anointing,
our last gesture of love.
But we found ourselves
even bereaved of that.

The tomb was empty.
No soldiers.
No stone.
Just a gaping hole
that mirrored the shocking

emptiness of our hearts.

We ran back to tell the others,
but they didn't -
couldn't -
believe us.

So I returned,
to weep for my lost love,
sure that his body
like my hopes,
had been snatched away.

In fact I begged the gardener
to please, please tell me where
they had taken him.

But then
just one sweet word:
"Mary."

The blur of my tears
may have blinded me to him,
but my ears over the years
had been too tuned to his voice
calling my name
to deny what I heard.

It was impossible,
but it was him.

In my joy I wanted to hold him,
tell him of my love.

But he knew the dangers
of such an attachment.
There was too much to do.

Too much to share.

Too much to tell.

And so I was sent,
the first Apostle,

to do,

share,

tell

of my beloved's love
for the world.

DOWN-UNDER RESURRECTION



It must have been a relief
to escape the searing heat
of vicious tongues
and pain of piercing nails,
and to rest in the dark tomb.
And then there was the wetness
of the dewy grass under your feet
in the garden.
And here you are now
on the seashore,
feeling the coolness
of the sand between your toes.

Now,
with all that renewed energy,
I don't suppose you're up for
a game of beach cricket?

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