

Dear Friends,

April 5th this year is Palm Sunday and the beginning of Holy Week in which Christians relive the last days of our Lord's earthly life through Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and, of course, Easter Day. This annual commemoration of Christ's suffering and Passion enables us to meditate on Jesus Christ and understand more fully the wonderful love of God.

As I mentioned last month, our country and the world is going through a serious crisis, not only the 'financial crunch' which affects material wealth through selfish greed based on the worship of Mammon, but a far worse spiritual crisis which is really at the root of it all, a rejection of the One true God, the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity, and His Moral Code, the Ten Commandments., and the consequent loss of the knowledge of right and wrong.

Mankind, in his destructive arrogance, invents ideologies and religions to justify his immoral and selfish behaviour, and where possible to infiltrate and attempt to destroy Christ's Church, and persecute by various means those who follow Him.

Thank God, the gates of Hell will never prevail against the Church, for this was the promise of Christ whose Body it is in the world. However, individuals can and do succumb with terrible consequences for themselves.

It is the duty of every true believer to renew their relationship with Christ our Saviour through worship, especially in the Eucharist, and with prayer and informed Bible Reading, so that they may grow closer to the source of their being and also be able to help others to attain the same.

In the early 1960's, Michael Ramsey, 1904-1988, Archbishop of Canterbury, and a saintly man of great learning, visited my home country of St. Vincent, West Indies, where I was a young Priest. I had the honour, with the rest of our clergy, of meeting him at Bishop's Court and having a deep discussion on various aspects of the Faith including the then Anglican/Methodist talks; I had the extra honour of lending him my rose coloured vestments, which I still have and treasure, for his celebration of Mass at the Cathedral. The Archbishop made a great impression upon us all, and especially some of the young men of the island who were questioning the Christian Faith, with whom he had a special meeting.

Archbishop Ramsey, who worked for the re-unity of Anglicans and Roman Catholics, visited Pope Paul VI in 1960, and with him established ARCIC. He wrote in his book *God, Christ and the world*: "The Easter Faith, existential as it is, was and is related to History. . . . Christianity entered history because of the Resurrection. Without it there would be no Christianity. And Christianity entered history as the religion of a crucifixion that was liberating and victorious.... the gospel of life through death, of losing life so as to find it, of sacrificial love possessing sovereign power."

In his book *Canterbury Pilgrim* he also wrote that there are: "three facts which no reputable historian will want to deny. Jesus existed. Jesus died by crucifixion. Subsequently the phenomenon of Christianity came about."

How did this phenomenon of Christianity survive, flourish and transform for the better the lives of, and give hope and purpose to millions of people down the centuries, and still do so today?

Our Blessed Lord had taught His disciples the significance of his impending death, but they, not wanting to consider such an unthinkable event, did not take it seriously nor grasp His teaching. When the Crucifixion happened, except for His Blessed Mother the Virgin Mary, St. John and St. Mary Magdalene, all the other disciples fled for fear of their own lives, and His teachings would have died with Him.

But then something amazing occurred, the Apostles said that Jesus appeared to them alive. They learnt that (*Archbishop Ramsey wrote*) "this horrible event is not ignominy, defeat, disgrace; it is good news, a divine action which has brought salvation. . . . They saw, heard, and received the impact of His person upon them as He gave them, not comforting illusions, but challenges to new actions and new understandings."

On Good Friday, therefore, we commemorate the greatest event that ever occurred in the history of mankind, the victory of Love over evil and death by Jesus Christ on the Cross, and through it and because of it, on Easter Sunday, as it is called in the English speaking world, we celebrate Christ's consequent Resurrection from the dead and our own in Him.

The Cross and Christ's Resurrection is not an illusion, as some today would have us believe, but an historical fact which transformed the human race for the better and raised, and continues to raise, it to the highest concepts of fulfilment in this world, and a deeper understanding of Creation; it also holds out hope for eternal life with all who are in Him.

As we come to the end of our Lenten season may I remind you of your Lenten Offerings which has enabled us in the past to give aid to the church overseas, who are less well off than ourselves, and often struggling under terrible persecution, privation and even death, to maintain their Christian Faith.

My wife, Ann, joins me in praying that God may bless your observance of Holy Week, with a holy and happy Easter.

Your Priest & Friend,

Fr. Brian.