

## Easter 10

A little more than a year ago I presided at the funeral of a friend, and afterwards at the collation the widow asked the hired singer to sing the song, “It had to be you.” It has been her and her husband’s song when they married in the forties. But the man didn’t know it, nor did anyone else—of if so, only the melody but not the words. The only two people there who knew the words were the widow and the priest. So we led the party in song.

Songs are so important for our lives. We hear a song and a scene from our past emerges in all its details, or if not a scene, then a vague feeling or mood which calls up for us a past time. The same is true with our faith. Our Christmas carols are an example of this power of songs to create a mood, a feeling, within us. Less so for Easter than Christmas, it seems. Why? Perhaps because what we celebrate at Easter, the Lord’s rising, is less imaginable than his birth. We have experienced births; we have not experienced a resurrection. Nevertheless, the Easter alleluia and few Easter hymns do create an Easter mood in us. Personally I cannot read the first sentence of this Easter Gospel in its Marcan form without recalling a Latin hymn: “et valde mane una sabbatorum, veniunt ad monumentum, orto jam sole.” “And very early when the sun had

risen, on the first day of the week, they (the women) came to the tomb.” For me that is Easter, and it smells of early morning and lilies, though I am sure there were no lilies that first morning.

The women were coming with spices, Luke’s Gospel tells us. They were preparing to see a mangled body, a body that had been scourged and tortured and crucified, a body that had been destroyed almost beyond by belief by what had been done to it. They were not preparing for a pretty sight. But they would honor it by washing it and anointing it with spices. How beautiful their devotion to Jesus! The male disciples are in hiding for fear that they will suffer Jesus’ fate, but the women remain faithful and unafraid and come to the tomb “early in the morning.”

But then there is no body. Instead there are angels and their message: “He is not here. He has been raised.” They go to tell the eleven and the others, but, we are told, “their story seemed like nonsense and they did not believe them.”

But we believe them. When a loved one dies, it takes time to believe that he or she is really gone. You reach for a phone to call them and then check yourself. It must be terrible for a husband or wife because it was so natural for them to have the other around,

and now they are not there. Slowly, over time, the reality sets in. The person is gone. It is then that we are challenged to believe that the person, though gone from us, from our everyday lives, is not gone for God. God does not forget us. God is a God of the living, not the dead, Jesus told us, and having called us into existence He will continue to call us to a fuller existence beyond our life here and now. This is what happened to the Lord Jesus; this is what we are promised will happen to us.

But we have to believe that life is more than what we see and hear and feel right now. I think that science can help us here when it points out to us how mysterious and beautiful our universe is, a universe of which we see and feel very, very little, but which is nevertheless real.

Let us believe, then, in the goodness of God's intentions for us, that he has promised us life. Let us see in the resurrection of Jesus a promise of our own resurrection. He has been raised, and we will be raised. Amen! Alleluia!