

The Christian Community

Movement for Religious Renewal

Hollywood Congregation

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Newsletter for the 3rd week of Passiontide from Sunday 21st March.

Dear friends, one of my colleagues wrote these words last year, at the beginning of the first lockdown. We never expected that a whole year later they would still apply. Ben

When we sit in the Act of Consecration during Passiontide, we are confronted starkly with the black at the altar. The servers and the priest are all in black and a black frontal is draped from the altar. Black creates the inner mood necessary in order to prepare for Easter.

It can feel painful, as if we are having to pass through the eye of a needle. And so we are: we have to, in order to journey to a new life, which is the mystery of Easter.

We look outside and see the beauty of the first glorious sunny days of Spring, and see that nature continues to rejoice in her own strength and destiny. The human being however is not merely a natural being, but has a spiritual dimension too. And so, we must experience the inner life, as nature does not in the same way.

And in these current days, we can truly feel that discrepancy between nature's joy and the inner challenge that faces us. We can feel the black gravity of Passiontide especially during this pandemic, as human community is taken from us, as many people's livelihoods are threatened, as uncertain questions about the future proliferate in our souls. We confront the black and its primal mood, the mood of a threshold: fear.

In the seasonal prayer, we are also confronted with a stark and direct voice which addresses us: 'O Man'. And shockingly, it tells us that the place where our heart is, is empty and that in our every breath, there is a longing for the spirit.

The heart, which has long been associated with our capacity to generate love, is it somehow like an unused receptacle, empty? Could it hold unimaginably more love? If it is empty and hollow, does it leave a space for fear to sit in its place?

With every breath that we take here on earth, do we not long to strive to seek the spirit? Do we not feel so much more truly alive when we experience moments when this was so? To the angelic worlds that accompany us with their loving gaze, is every breath of ours like an eternity, in which we could do so much more than we do?

When we are not permitted everyday human company or community, how palpably do we feel that something essential is missing! The sun shines outwardly, but the human sun that can only weave between people and which truly warms us, is missing.

Surely our greatest fear must be to live in a world in which the freedom to be formed by the forces of love – and to be creative and giving with the forces of our love – were taken away from us?

To experience this existentially has always been the meaning of Passiontide; so that in immersing ourselves in the black depths of Passiontide, we may grasp the world-changing miracle of Easter.

Passiontide has come into our lives. It must be because we are now strong enough to withstand its gravity, and bring the reality of Easter into our lives, not merely as an outwardly celebrated festival - but as an inner experience.

Luke Barr

Hollywood

Passiontide

Thursday 18 th March	The Act of Consecration of Man	10.00
Thursday 25 th March	The Act of Consecration of Man	10.00

Mourne Grange (in Dawn Hall !)

Sunday 21 st March	The Act of Consecration of Man	10.15
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The gospel for the 3rd Sunday of Passiontide, 21 March is John 8, 1-12



Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives; but as soon as day dawned he was already in the Temple court, where the people flocked to him, and he sat down and began to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees led in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand in the middle, and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do *you* say?” They said this only as a trap, in order finally to have a reason for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down, and started to write something in the earth with his finger. When they kept on pressing him with questions, he stood up and said to them, “Whoever among you is without sin, let him cast the first stone at her.” And again, he bent down and wrote in the earth.

When they heard this, their conscience began to stir within them, and they went out, one after the other, beginning with the eldest. And only Jesus was left and the woman who stood in the middle. Jesus stood up, and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one passed judgment on you?”

“No one, sir,” she said.

“Then neither do I judge you,” Jesus declared. “Go now, and leave your life of sin.”

And Jesus began to speak to them again and said: “I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but have the light in which there is life.”

A homily on John 8: 1-12



In the beginning, God gave a command to Adam, the law-abiding masculine side of the human being. Humans were not to eat of the fruit of knowledge without dire consequences. Eve, the curious, open feminine side of the human, in innocence, grasped the fruit and ate.

For already in Paradise, God had allowed the tempter to approach the human.

In today's reading, we hear of the further evolution of this ancient human motif.

The boundary-breaking, forward-moving feminine side of the human is given a death sentence as punishment for breaking the law.

This punishment is to be meted out by the so-called law-abiding masculine element.

Yet Christ rises above this problematic either-or, black or white antagonism.

Though He clearly discerns, He does not judge. He gives the feminine, forward-moving side of the human being the strength to observe out of herself the appropriateness of boundaries.

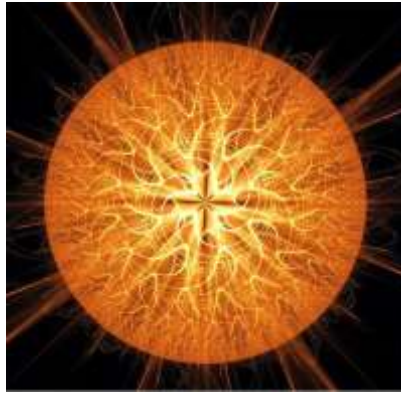
And neither does he judge our punitive masculine side. Rather, by writing in the earth, he leads us to understand that we all have sinned. His unspoken command to our masculine side is that wise empathy is more important, more fruitful, more life-giving than judgment.

For wise empathy leads us out of the finality of death into the living future.

All of our sins are written into the earth. But Christ Himself has taken on the earth as His Living Body. Thus, our sins are sins against Him, which He nonetheless absorbs and transforms into a way forward.

Through Him, working with Him, we can find the way into God's light, His life, His love.

To the sun, by Roy Campbell



O let your shining orb grow dim,
Of Christ the mirror and the shield,
That I may gaze through you to Him,
See half the miracle revealed,
And in your seven hues behold
The Blue Man walking on the sea;
The Green, beneath the summer tree,
Who calls the children; then the Gold,
with palms; the Orange, flaring bold
with scourges; Purple in the garden
(As Greco saw); and then the Red
Torero (Him who took the toss
And rode the black horns of the cross -
But rose snow-silver from the dead!)