EASTERTIDE 3

The new Shofar

Biblically, waiting is not just something we have to do until we get what we want. Waiting is part of the process of becoming what God wants us to be.

– John Ortberg –

Alleluia! Alleluia! He is Risen indeed!

Alleluia!

The first disciples of Jesus had travelled through the Easter mysteries burdened with a range of personal experiences, among them, fear, betrayal, denial, disappointment and failure. All they had known and hoped for was taken from them suddenly and violently. They found themselves in a completely new and unknown world. Their hopes and expectations had been shattered. As the two on the road to Emmaus said, *'We had hoped that he (Jesus) would have been the one to set Israel free.'* What was left unsaid was the question: Had we hoped in vain? Were our hopes misplaced?

The readings of the Easter Vigil reminded us of how God led the People of Israel out of slavery into freedom. It was a real and physical 'exodus'. The readings for the remainder of the Easter Season continue to tell us of a journey that takes and leads us to a spiritual place of hope and new life, a life possible because Jesus rose from the dead. All our hope is focussed on the Risen Christ and in him we trust.

The Easter message is "Peace be with you"!

The gospels from Easter to Pentecost describe the appearances of the Risen Jesus to his followers after the Resurrection. The powerful theme of Peace runs through all of those appearances: those first believers were unsure, worried, anxious and full of doubt. How could they not be after experiencing the shame and tragedy of the crucifixion? Each time Jesus appears to them He acknowledges these doubts, fears and anxiety, and importantly for us he does not condemn them. He also acknowledges the reality of the crucifixion by showing them the wounds in his hands and side. He wants them to keep his battered and bruised body before their minds. Christ crucified is not an image to be pushed away into the past. He is and remains Christ Crucified, died and Risen in glory. In these appearances, he strengthens and encourages them with these powerful words of promise: *'Peace be with you, do not be afraid.'* He stands there with and amongst them in their anxiety and confusion.

'Peace be with you, do not be afraid.' The image we are offered is clear: Christ in-the-midst-of-his-followers. The Risen Christ is our source and guarantee of Peace.

Applying the gifts of Easter to our lives is up to us

Here is the rub. We have not yet arrived at Pentecost, the Promised day in which God will send the Spirit upon us, that living gift of grace enabling us to access the Peace that embraces and empowers us. As we do our best to deal with the impact the dark forces and powers abounding in our world are having on our daily lives, we too are possibly feeling sad, confused, afraid and anxious, even angry. Where are the promises of Christ being manifested? Where are the

changes He promised? As we have learnt from the disciples and apostles, it can be difficult to believe that our daily lives will be transformed; that we will get through this time of uncertainty and anxiety. We too are waiting for better and happier days just as they were. Do we and can we have experience the ways in which the Risen Jesus is standing with and amongst us saying, inviting *'Peace be with you, do not be afraid.'* We confess he is here but sometimes are having difficulties experiencing his powers.

Presently we are waiting for Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the promise of a new and transformed world. This period of Eastertide is a time in which we too are waiting and hoping; we are waiting in joyful hope. If the Resurrection this year offers us anything it is this: new life, goodness and hope *will* prevail, we *will* get through each dark, confusing moment and the troublesome days will pass. Afterwards, when we encounter the Risen Christ and take up his invitation to follow him, our daily lives will never be the same again. In taking up the spiritual invitations of Eastertide we will have come to a more profound understanding of the Truths of our faith and have discovered the way God is transforming us into revitalised images of himself. We prepare to be the way the Father continues the mission of the Son.

Easter is our invitation to live lives transformed

At the first Pentecost the followers of Jesus had their sadness turned to joy, their weaknesses turned to strength and their fear transformed into courage. Eventually, and in time, the same will happen to each of us – if we wait and live in joyful hope. Through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, we too will be renewed, refreshed and restored. But we know that waiting can be difficult, especially, when we are living with anxiety and uncertainty. As Christians, we are called to be people of hope. These days, now more than ever, we are being called not lose hope in ourselves, each other or God. We are being called to live in joyful hope during this Easter Season, perhaps in ways we have never been asked before.

As Christians, we are called to be people of hope. What does it mean to be a person of patient hope? Henri Nouwen a Dutch priest and writer offers us some words of wisdom on what it means to be a person of faith who waits;

A waiting person is a patient. The word 'patience' means the willingness to stay where we are and live the situation out to the full in the belief that something hidden there will be shown to us. Impatient people are always expecting the real to happen somewhere else and therefore want to go there. The moment is empty. But patient people dare to stay where they are. Patient living means to live actively in the present and wait there. Waiting, then is not passive. It involves nurturing the moment, as a mother nurtures the child that is growing in her womb. (The Path of Waiting)

Post Covid we are discovering and experiencing a new 'normal'. We are being called to wait patiently, but with hope. As we wait for Pentecost Sunday, let us do all we can to discern where and how the Spirit of the Risen Christ is at work in our own lives and in the world around us. We pray that we can embrace the present with open hearts, filled with excitement because of the unbounded possibilities that open for us through faith. Let it be a time for rediscovering how

we are not alone – Jesus stands beside us, saying to each us, *'Peace be with you, do not be afraid.'*

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