

A Good Friday Easter

I recently conducted a quiet, contemplative service where we listened to a number of poems. The service had a Good Friday flavour dwelling on the pain and suffering that we all experience in our living. During the service someone started to weep. Intuitively we all wanted to comfort the person who was weeping but in this case we sat with the weeping in recognition that there are terrible situations that happen in our world, situations for which the only rational response is weeping.

Now you may think that this is a strange start to an Easter reflection. But I want this Easter to make a case for including Good Friday in our Easter celebration. You see I think that our society and some of our churches would rather by-pass Good Friday and get to the fun and celebration of Easter. We live in a society that will do all in its power to avoid pain and suffering. We are wrapped in a blanket of blandness and inanity as we are encouraged to sing together "Don't worry be happy." Easter bunnies and butterflies run riot, not as symbols of new life, but as ends in themselves. But the symbolism of Easter loses its power if we ignore Good Friday.

And this becomes even sadder when the church tries to by-pass Good Friday. In my last parish we used to conduct a Stations of the Cross through the town in collaboration with the other mainline denominations. It was a painful re-enactment of Jesus' passion. One year the remaining churches decided to have a concert on Good Friday, starting at the same time. It was to be a joyous celebration of the crucifixion. And it made me want to weep. Similarly, just this week I heard from a woman that she had been approached by her congregation to put on a skit for their Good Friday fish lunch! I assume it was an effort to brighten up the day.

As I See It, Easter will never be Easter without Good Friday. A Good Friday existence of pain and suffering is the year long experience of billions of people world-wide. Many in our Easter world by-pass this Good Friday existence, with holidays and eggs because we don't want to see, for seeing it will cause us to weep. We even by-pass our own experiences of Good Friday and so close ourselves off from the Easter experience of change and resurrection. And to do so is to miss the point of Easter. Easter's power derives from the horror of Good Friday. It's the power that comes from knowing that death, pain and suffering will not have the last word, that new life is possible. And God knows how much the world needs to hear that message. So this Easter why not weep a little and laugh a little, for Jesus knew that both are needed for true healing, -weeping and laughing – Good Friday and Easter.

Have a Good Friday Easter.

Tony would be more than happy to chat about the above article with anyone who wants to.

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