

Holy Saturday Thoughts.

Dear Friends,

I had quite an early walk this morning, and was thinking about today, and this time between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Earlier I had been looking back in my mind to the happy Easters I have spent over the years with family. And then I began to think about my past life – of which there is now quite a lot!

And there are some pages in the book of my life that I would like to tear out! Mistakes I've made, stupidity, willfulness, episodes I would like to forget. And it made me think about how our Lord Jesus deals with all our sinfulness. I remembered Pilgrim from the Pilgrim's Progress struggling with his great burden of sin on his back and then finally laying it down at the foot of Jesus' cross, with immense relief.

And so I thought about how I have so often brought my own burden of sin to the foot of Christ's cross and left it there, with the assurance that He has forgiven me.

And I wondered how this can be. How can it happen? It is of course a mystery, what happens on the cross. We call it the Paschal Mystery. But Christians have always known, sensed, understood, experienced forgiveness through the death of Jesus and his resurrection. I can't analyse it and give you an answer.

But I thought it's a bit like when someone you love is really angry, is hurting and cross and takes it out on you. Sometimes as a parent we have to endure a barrage, an outpouring of rage and hurt from our child. And what do we do? We don't yell back at them, or go out of the room and slam the door behind us. Rather, we stay with them, we let them get it all off their chest, and, like blotting paper, we allow our love for them to absorb all their anger and pain; we take it into ourselves and we carry it for them. And in a small way I think that's a bit like what Jesus does on the cross: he takes all the evil we throw at him and he doesn't fight back, he doesn't rage at us, he absorbs it into himself, he carries it for us, he for-gives.

Then Jesus is buried in the tomb, and it's as though he takes all our sinfulness away with him and it is buried, for ever.

But then comes Easter Day, and Jesus is seen again. Does that mean our sin comes out of the tomb with him? No. Because the Jesus who meets his disciples on that first Easter Day is transformed: his friends don't recognise him straightaway because he isn't just a resurrected corpse, but he has been given a new form of life. Through his death comes transformation and new life.

As we let him take our sins away with him to be buried in the tomb, they too can be transformed: God can use them, so that we can learn from what we have done wrong, we can grow in understanding of ourselves and what makes us go the wrong way, and in understanding of others and what drives them to take wrong paths.

We can learn what we have to avoid, to look out for. We can learn how to help others in their struggles. We can, especially, show them the way to forgiveness, to their own resurrection even in this life, to the new life that the risen Lord Jesus offers so freely to each and every one of us. Hallelujah!