

## A REFLECTION FOR EASTER SUNDAY 2017

What kind of a world is this? In the last few days we have witnessed pictures of victims of chemical warfare, political leaders squaring up to each other as they try to apportion culpability, we have read of doctors being given permission to turn off a young child's life support against the wishes of his parents; conversely a terminally ill man has been refused permission to legally end his own life – even though this is in accord with his wishes; cancer drugs that are freely available in Scotland are refused to patients in England. Morally we are in a complete mess, a rudderless ship that seems more dependent on the power of sound-bites and social media rather than having the conviction to plot a course and stick with it – no matter how rough the sea. Technology and the internet may have promised to make life easier but sometimes things seem much more complicated. In our personal lives, too, we face our own sadness and difficulty. We grieve, we mourn, we face terminal illness, a messy separation or divorce; we worry about the children, we try to show patience to the dementia sufferer. You have your own experiences. Where are we going? What kind of a world is this? The reality is that we live in a Good Friday world with all of its horrors. This is the kind of world we live in.

And yet, as I type these few words, outside, a woodpecker is hammering away at the nut feeder, the birds are singing, springtime is festooned in vibrant yellow and luxuriant green; lambs are gambolling in lush pasture, gorging on their mothers' milk. Our Good Friday world seems to pass them by at least. They embrace life – life as God intended it. And this is the contrast, the dilemma with which we, as Christians, continually battle. Our world may be a Good Friday world, but we are Easter People – and "Alleluia!" is our song. Easter Sunday is our focus, rising as it does from the utter desolation and despair of Good Friday.

Hope is at the heart of the Easter message. Death and suffering do not have the final say in our affairs. They will always be there but the time will come when they give way to the glory of the Resurrection. Jesus united himself with us fully when he became a human being – precisely so that we can share in His victory. Good Friday is a transition, it is not the end. Easter Sunday brings us hope. Hope is a very quiet emotion. Hope speaks in the hushed recesses of our souls. Hope brings us peace, an inner peace, a peace this world will never understand.

We congregate on Easter Sunday. It's a lovely word "congregate". It implies togetherness and unity. We are united – united by our collective sense and awareness of pain in our troubled world. We are still presented with horrific images of war, news stories of heartache. Hope does not remove the pain but it gives meaning in our life. It gives us new purpose because Jesus is alive and He speaks his words of peace to us - just as he spoke to the disciples: *"Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you. A peace this world cannot give, this is my gift to you"*.

Faith in the resurrection of Jesus is the basis of our hope in eternal life. It's this hope that enables us to bear patiently the trials of life. There is a quiet joy among us, a deep sense of peace because we know that life is stronger than death, love is stronger than fear and hope is stronger than despair. I hope you have a happy Easter and that you are able to spend reflective time, thanking God for the enormity of His Gift. His victory is our victory. Our Good Friday world will end because He is Risen Alleluia! Alleluia!

Bernard Traynor