



Letter for Easter 2021

Easter in the Pandemic

To paraphrase the Gospel of Luke: “Now on that same Easter day two of them were on their way. They spoke with each other about all that had happened. While they were in discussion with each other, Jesus himself came near and walked with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. He spoke to them :’What are you discussing together as you walk along?’ They stood still, looking sad. One of them, named Cleopas, answered, ‘ Are you the only one in this country who doesn’t know what has been happening here the last year?’ ‘What then?’ asked Jesus. They told him: ‘What is happening is COVID-19. That unpredictable virus. These impossible measures. These masked contacts. This sticky hand gel. These one and a half meters. That lonely working from home. These rectangular digital meetings. These undelivered vaccines. These forbidden church services. These postponed communions and confirmations. These very restricted funerals. For the second year in a row no Easter celebrations. Several government officials have surprised us. They are allowing church services outdoors. And it keeps raining! A few of us have still gone to church but it’s like being in an empty tomb. No ambiance, no choir, no people. Certainly no “*Fratelli Tutti*” and not much to notice of “*The Joy of the Gospel*” either. Where is he, Our Lord Jesus? Didn’t he promise to stay with us, until the end of time? We hoped that he would save us but all told we have been in lockdown now for more than a year. How long can we carry on?

Then Jesus said to them, ‘O foolish men and slow to believe in all that I told you.’ And beginning with Moses and all the prophets he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. He told about the earthly paradise and how short it lasted. About the flood and how long Noah with his family and the animals would meander around on a ship. About Abraham who left the land of his forefathers to go to an unknown destination, from an old to a new normal. About Moses who went with his people through the desert, a long journey of 40 years—and still not a wasted time- through loneliness, hardship, rebellion and disappointment. And how God hardly let himself be seen, just a glimpse, hidden in a cloud and high up on a mountain. About psalmists praying from out of deep valleys of loneliness, moaning like a dove, calling from their imprisonment, pleading for mercy, expecting release. About prophets who spoke encouragement so that their people in exile stood firm, pointing out the way to healing and renewal, after the oppression. So they walk on.

(...)

Slowly the sun sets. They smell the spring blossoms in the rising mist. A shepherd brings his flock home. A woman prepares her cooking pot. While Jesus is speaking, he reminds them of his own words. About the Good Samaritan and caring for each other. About having patience like the sower who waits for the green ear of grain, then for the full grown plant, then for the ripe grain. About carrying his cross, rather than running away or cheating. About coming together, letting go and beginning again, like little Zacchaeus. About blessed the peace makers and blessed those who hunger for righteousness. About washing each other's feet. About dying out of love for his friends. About God whom he calls his Father. Together they walk farther. The silences become longer.

When they reach the village where they have to be, he gives the impression that he wants to continue on. But they insist: 'Stay with us, because it's almost evening and the day is ending.' Then he goes inside to stay with them. Once he was at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to them. Now their eyes were open and they recognized him, but immediately he disappeared from their sight."

I wish you a Blessed Easter. Truly, the Lord is risen!

+ *Johann Bonny*

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