

A Quiet Easter?

It's so quiet. Too quiet. Normally, this is the time of year when the noise is building. This is the time of year when we transition from the mellow tones of "Jesus, I Will Ponder Now" to the loud "Hosannas" of Palm Sunday. This is when we join in the somber notes of "Jesus, in Thy Dying Woes," and from there are catapulted to the heights of joy with the triumphant announcement that "Jesus Christ is Risen Today" and the confession that "I Know that My Redeemer Lives."

Alas, this year, that is not to be. Not now. Now, we are kept from gathering by a pestilence that threatens the lives of millions. Now, we keep away from one another in order to preserve the life and health of those around us. Now, everything is quiet.

But that first Easter Sunday was also quiet. Yes, noisy crowds had paraded into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, and other noisy crowds had assembled to weep and wail and ridicule and mock Jesus as He went to the cross on Good Friday. But by Sunday that sacred Passover Sabbath was over, and people in Jerusalem were packing up and heading home. There were no large gatherings, no festive crowds, no songs of joy or triumph. It was quiet.

The small group that had followed Jesus was being very careful to keep quiet, hiding behind locked doors out of fear they might be next to die. Indeed, they had nothing to make noise about, for as far as they knew their Teacher was dead. All they could do was finish the burial process and try to figure out what they might do next. Perhaps they could split up and go back to the homes they had left behind, go back to the villages where they could live out their lives safely, quietly.

Their sadness suddenly changed to a mixture of confusion and joy when the women returned from the tomb sharing news of angelic messages and visions of Jesus alive again. Still, they probably sang no songs of joy until that evening, when Jesus entered that locked room and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

From that day to this, the Christian Church has set aside every Sunday not as a "replacement" for the Jewish Sabbath but as a "little Easter." Christians have not always been able to gather on Sundays—prevented at times by persecutions and plagues, by wars and disasters, and now by a disease called the "coronavirus"—but nothing has stopped those "little Easters" from coming. Sunday comes, and with it comes the time and opportunity to remember and rejoice in Jesus, who was crucified for our transgressions, who died to pay for our sins, and who rose from the dead to bring us forgiveness and salvation, new life now and everlasting life in the age to come.

This year's Easter may not be as loud as Easters past, but that doesn't make its good news any less real. Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Nothing can take that good news away from us! For, as St Paul wrote, "I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39)

And when this is over, when the threat of this virus has passed and these safety restrictions are lifted, we shall gather again. In that day, we shall celebrate a new Holy Week, no matter what time of year it may be. We will begin anew, with Palm Sunday and Good Friday and, yes, Easter Sunday, to give thanks, to rejoice, and to proclaim our crucified and risen Savior, Jesus Christ!

For Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Let us go forth in peace in the name of the Lord!
Alleluia!