

Pentecost 22 Remembrance Sunday 2025 All Souls' **Resurrection and Life** dtw

From our Gospel today: Jesus said to the Sadducees, "God is not God of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of the (dead) are alive." Luke 20.38

And from our Sentence for the day (Message paraphrase John 11. 25-26) Jesus said to Martha: "I am right now, Resurrection and Life. The one who believes in me, even though he or she dies, will live. And everyone who lives believing in me does not ultimately die at all. Do you believe this?"

Near the end of his disease-ridden life, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart wrote:

As death, when we come to consider it closely, is the true goal of our existence, I have formed during the last few years such close relations with this best and truest friend of humankind, that his image is not only no longer terrifying to me, but is indeed very soothing and consoling! And I thank my God for graciously granting me the opportunity...of learning that death is the key which unlocks the door to our true happiness.

Those words are taken from a little book *In Sympathy*, edited by Karen Sullivan. When we find ourselves in the depths of trouble, sickness, disease, disappointment or grief, it can be difficult to imagine how we might ever feel alive again. Our readings today remind us that the Spirit of God gives life and hope. We are called to trust God's power to forgive, restore and raise up, even in the midst of our fragility and vulnerability. We know that God does breathe new hope into our lives ultimately because of our Easter faith, - the dawning of that glorious day, the Day of Resurrection – a day to 'take our breath away'!

As we think of our loved ones who have died, many of us could identify with the grieving words of Martha to Jesus, "Lord if you had been here, my brother would not have died." (Jn 11.21) In *Words of Comfort* Stephanie Ericsson writes on the subject of Grief:

Grief discriminates against no one. It kills. Maims. And cripples. It is the ashes from which the phoenix rises, and the mettle of re-birth. It returns life to the living dead. It teaches that there is nothing absolutely true, or untrue. It assures the living that we know nothing for certain. It humbles. It shrouds. It blackens. It enlightens.

Grief will make a new person out of you, if it doesn't kill you in the making.

In the same book we find these words, which I read at the funeral of Nola Brockhouse in September.

Some of the greatest achievements of humankind have come from people suffering under great burdens – loss and imprisonment, sickness and deprivation. They demonstrate as no others can, the dignity and power of the human spirit. Beethoven wrote his most noble and imaginative works after deafness had overtaken him. Milton wrote from blindness. Bunyan from jail. Stephen Hawking surveyed the universe from a wheelchair. The persecuted raise their voices from oppression to speak for their people. The disfigured in war bring hope to the deprived.

Some are only known to a few. Some are never recognised. But they tell us not to be afraid. There is work still to be done. There are things to be achieved. There is beauty to be created. There are puzzles to be solved. There is happiness to be had. The world is full of marvels. Accept them and be glad. Do not let anything deprive you of a love for life.

I have shared with you before that in my experience in faith and life, in our fumbling humanness, God permits things to occur which may plunge us into darkness, unease and sometimes a deep sense of loss; it might be the loss of pride, loss of dignity or bodily function. It might be the loss of purpose in life, unemployment, or perhaps the death of a loved one, as Martha and Mary experienced. Associated feelings of blame, guilt or anger can also lie close. But often, in my experience too, and when I am least expecting it, an aspect of the gospel presents itself to me in which I sense Lazarus-like movement, encouragement and hope. Gently, from deep inside, where we can feel parched from the anguish, we can become aware of the presence of Christ loving us back from death to life again. God is revealed to us perhaps through Scripture or a person or a chance event or while we just stay with the pain. And then it lifts and we can find ourselves rejoicing in a new and deepening sense of being and belonging. We have been 'brought home'. We might reflect in wonder at how what was once a barrier has paradoxically become a bridge, our own cross which we have taken up through to a personal resurrection. But first it seems that we, like the Christ we follow, have to be prepared to lose everything. Such was the case literally, for millions who have lost their lives in the theatres of war in selfless dedication and bravery. On this Remembrance Sunday we honour them, Lest we Forget.

I conclude with a poem *The Ninth Apostle*, which I wrote not long after the collapse of one of the stacks of the 12 Apostles along the Great Ocean Road, and we passed through there again recently.

*These many decades the sea has washed against me and I have withstood,
Proud.*

I am one of the wonders of the world.

And I have noticed all kinds of comings and goings –

Great whales spouting their dignity,

binocularised tourists trying to get a closer look,

clicking away at me ad infinitum.

*Oh, I've lasted through black and white to digital I'll have you know
and long before.*

*They even built a tunnel and a boardwalk in my honour;
thousands pass by and then tick me off their itineraries.*

*Now, I have been shattered,
fallen to little pieces of my former glory;
sunk below the waves.*

*But now I see things below the surface
of what I thought was everything.*

*Crabs and mussels take refuge in my broken shoulders
and my watery grave actually teems with unexpected life,
life I never imagined – abundant life!*

*And many, many friends;
friends who hang around longer than half an hour
and merely gaze.*

*Is this what it means truly to be an apostle?
Is this what it means to die?*