

Mary is in shock. Something is terribly wrong. She has been distraught since Friday and now she is finally able to go to the tomb where the remains of her beloved Jesus are... and they're not there. And in her grief she sees Jesus but she does not recognize him.

This week we have witnessed the shock and horror of a terrorist attack in Brussels. People just going about their regular lives suddenly had everything turned upside down. Lives lost, lives broken. In too many places in the world such fearful and terrible disruption of life is a daily event. People live and survive in the midst of great suffering. Suffering which we inflict on one another.

Centuries after that first Easter morning, the world still does not recognize Jesus. It does not recognize the truth that he brought. The truth that violence is not the way forward. That only love conquers violence and ends the cycle of retaliation. That is the message of Easter. Love is greater than violence of any kind. Perhaps we do not always remember the power of love because we think of it in Hallmark terms. We think of the excitement of romantic love or the close bond of parent and child. Yet love is much more than that; it is not a mushy sentimental kind of thing but a clear-seeing intentional will-to-good. The love of steel that Jesus showed is a love that conquers all things.

But Mary didn't know that. Mary didn't know it was Easter.

All she knew was that her life had been turned upside down, and she could not find the body of her beloved.

This week the clergy of the deanery met with Bishop Mary. As many of you know, she lost her husband in a cycling accident almost two years ago. She shared with us that she is still looking for resurrection. She is still hoping for the day when the Easter bunny comes.

But the Easter bunny doesn't come. Because resurrection is far more complicated than that. The Easter bunny never came for Mary Magdalene. Yes, she recognized Jesus in that life-changing awe-filled moment of overwhelming joy, "Rabbouni", but she also saw that he had changed, that things would never be the way they had been.

Resurrection does not mean that things go back to the way they were. In fact, it means quite the opposite. Resurrection means that things change. Jesus is changed, so much so that at first Mary does not recognize him. We are changed. In the resurrections of our personal lives, in the resurrections of our social and political lives, things change. And it's often not comfortable.

Butterflies are a symbol of resurrection. The caterpillar eats and eats and grows and grows until one day it stops, goes still and apparently dies. Inside the cocoon it auto-digests itself, until it is nothing but goo. Then, amazingly, its DNA rereads itself and transforms it into an adult butterfly. I can't imagine what happens to the consciousness of the creature in this process. When it is just protected goo, does it know that it is goo? Does it go into a suspended state of consciousness? Or does it hover somewhere waiting until the goo resolves itself and then re-enters its body?

I have no idea. But what I do know is that we humans do something rather similar. When we are transformed, when disaster hits, when grief happens we are reduced to a state of goo.

Unfortunately we don't have a protective cocoon, we are usually expected to pick up and carry on. Resurrection comes out of the goo.

We don't know what happened to Jesus after he was placed in the tomb and before Mary saw him that first Easter morning. Our ancestors believed that he went to hell, perhaps to bring back those who were there, or perhaps to look for his friend Judas. But to believe that, you have to first believe in a literal hell. Perhaps Jesus found himself in a state of goo. After the horror and agony of his death, was he ready to just get up and go, already completely the Christ? Or did he, human as he was, require a time of change, a time of protection in the cave of the tomb, while he transformed and adjusted to his new resurrection body?

Our God is a God of resurrection. After disaster there is always resurrection, if we choose it. But it is rarely immediate, and like Mary we often do not recognize it when it comes. In the middle of our pain and confusion, we don't know that it's Easter. When we are reduced to goo, we don't realize that we are being transformed.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to look at the pain of Brussels, the plight of refugees, bombing in Syria, the millions in South Sudan at risk of starvation, and see in it resurrection. But we are an Easter people and we are called to see, not with rose-tinted glasses but with the perspective of that steely love that Jesus showed us. We must do all we can to alleviate suffering, but we can also know that out of this too, God will bring resurrection.

It doesn't look that way. It looks as if the tomb is empty and God has deserted God's people. It looks like a mess from which there will be no deliverance. But we are given hope. We are Mary in the garden; we can see the presence of the Christ. We are the ones who can see that love conquers; that even when human love fails and we revert to our violent ways, God's love still triumphs.

For Jesus' resurrection shows that even when humans do their very worst, even when they betray and lie and torture and kill, God still loves. God still keeps coming back offering a different way. We don't recognize Easter in the middle of the goo, but it is there. God is transforming us and the whole of Creation.

And we are called to be a part of it. We are called to keep faith. To know that the resurrected and ascended Christ will one day put all things right. That is part of the movement of Creation - that all will be reconciled with God. Our task is to continue to hold that resurrection hope, to continue to look for the things that God is doing and to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in doing them.

We are a resurrection people, and we serve an Easter God.

Alleluia!