

From the Rector's Study ~

Lent concludes soon and gives way to the 'rising up again' of Jesus. We have turned inwardly to find out about ourselves in important ways; to find about our relationship with God, how accessible we are to God and in what ways we might unintentionally be closed off to God. On the journey into our own hearts and minds, we may find out about ourselves things that we'd almost rather not know.

We may discover that we're not quite as loving as we like to believe we are. Perhaps we're not as patient, not as wise, not as able, as we may like to think we are. We may realize that in some important ways we are not as Christ-like as we would like to be.

An inward journey to meet Christ in our hearts is an examination of who we really are, a rediscovery of ourselves as God knows us to be, and a reclaiming of ourselves as God loves us and accepts us, just as we are. Thus, it is also a reassurance that God is moving toward us, ever on a divine journey of holy reconciliation with humanity. In a season whose stark realities can suggest to us that God has turned away, our determination to make the journey is rewarded with a reaffirmation that God is drawing nearer to us always at a greater pace than we can move toward God.

On behalf of my family and myself, thank you ECR. You are our community of faith. We find God moving toward us in you. In your smiles, your caring questions, your quiet words of comfort and concern, your grip of hand, your hug of the shoulder, we find God enfolding us in God's Love and your own. The two are one. For this we thank God for each of you and for all you together.

The experience of my family's woundedness reminds me that each of us suffers wounds in his or her life. The experience of your expressions of your love reminds me that all of us in the community of ECR and of the wider Church are wounded when even one of us is suffering. We are the wounded healing community. Author and priest Henri Nouwen wrote of a priest being a 'wounded healer.' I understand now better than ever before what it is to which he was referring. I understand also that ECR is a community of wounded healers healing the wounded among us and around us. And we are community of people being healed by the Love of God for all.

Lent returns us to our woundedness in the sense that we face our mortality. We are reminded that it is in our mortality

that Christ Jesus meets us. Jesus meets us not in our virtue, our strengths, our idealized self-perfected identities; but in our vulnerabilities, our limitations, our grief, anger, and loneliness. Jesus came to dwell in our humanity; and so he came to know all of these elemental experiences of what it is to be human. He came to enter our woundedness and so to sanctify it with his own.

The other end of Lent is the emergence into renewal of life, re-birth, rising again from the experience of dying to the experience of living, and living even more fully than before. Rising up after being taken down, this is resurrection. This is an experience unique to Jesus Christ in his being at once fully God and fully human. But it is an experience that God's generosity opens up to share with humanity. Resurrection becomes part of our own experience now, ever since the original Easter morning.

Rising up again is your experience and mine more often than we may be accustomed to know. We may think of Resurrection as a 'judgment day' affair, something that will happen sometime 'way off in the future. It's true, of course, that resurrection as a final event is indeed something predicted for a future time, though a time whose proximity no one can predict. It's also true, though, that you and I rise again in little ways and large, rather daily. Intentionally or not, our world is broken. At its very best, it still does not know how to avoid completely being an environment that wounds at least some people, in some way, at some time or other.

But God offers us and provides us a way in this environment to rise up again. We rise wounded, yes, but we rise. Perhaps we rise even stronger, almost certainly we rise wiser and more compassionate.

Thank you, ECR. You are people of God's gift of Resurrection. Wounded, yes, yet my family and I are healing. As is true for all wounded persons, our healing will take time. Like all wounded persons who know the Love of God and the love of God's people, we are rising again. All of us share the woundedness of one another and that of Christ Jesus himself. Together, we are wounded with Christ and with Christ we rise again together to living truly and to truly living. God has blessed us. For ourselves and for those around us, we really are a community of Resurrection.

Love. Jim +