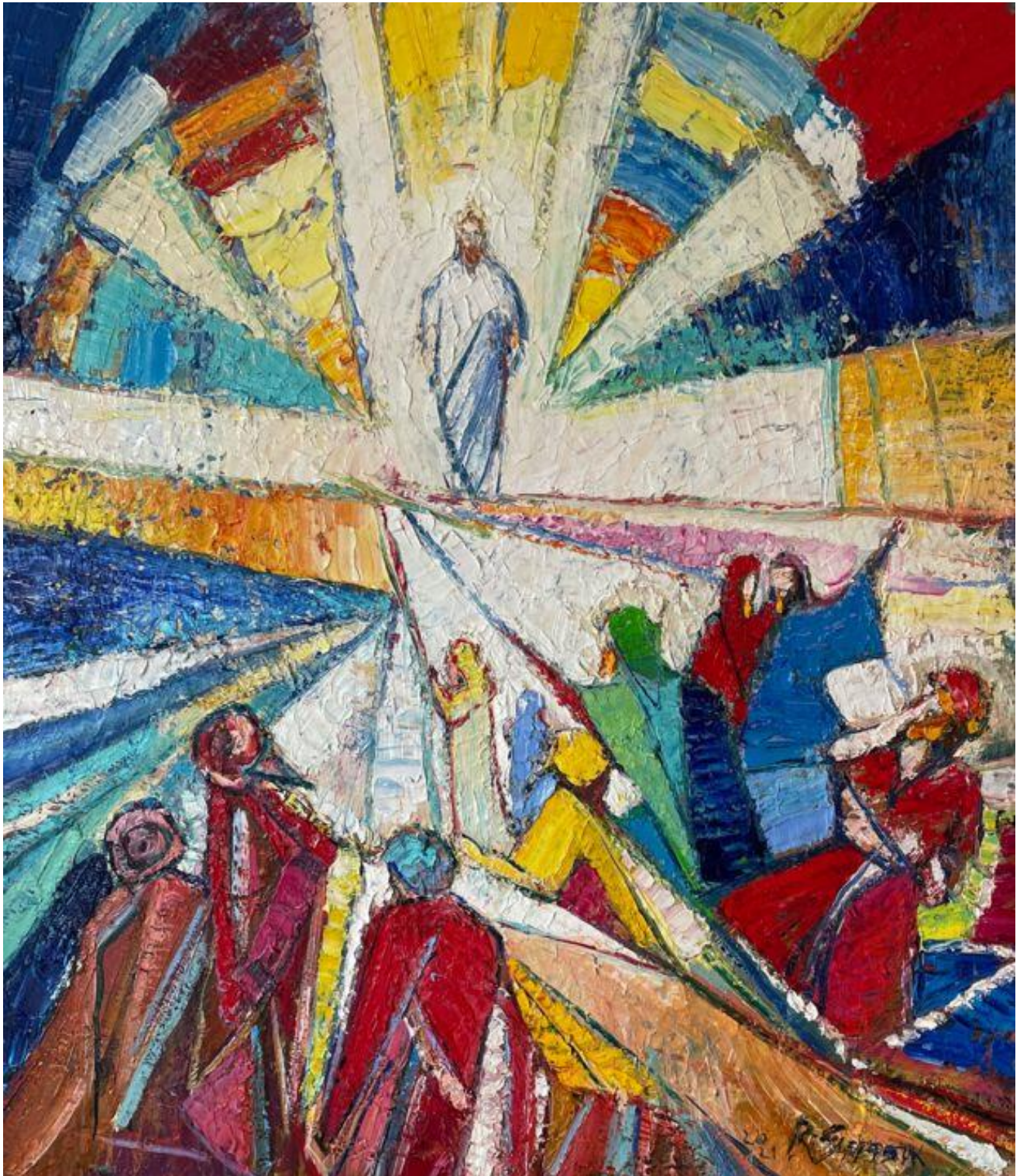


ORMOND UNITING CHURCH

EASTER DAY 2022



The Resurrection – Roman Sleptsuk

WORSHIP AT HOME

Easter Day is the culmination of the high point of the Church year. We celebrate Christ's breaking through of the bonds of death and rising to new life. As the first fruits of a new creation he invites us to participate in his reign, characterised by grace, love and a freedom inspired by his call to be God's children. We celebrate the radical and transforming love revealed to us through the resurrection.

This time is an opportunity to be still, seeking to be aware of the presence of God within.

Carve out a time for this practice; prepare yourself, as you might for a usual Sunday morning and remember that there are others from the congregation gathering at the same time as you. There are also many from the church around the globe who are gathering to seek the presence of God as we are.

Prepare a space in the house; find a comfortable chair, light a candle, turn off distracting noises and close the door if that will help you to be still. This is something that does not need to be hurried.

I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.

**The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.**

This is the Lord's doing;

it is marvellous in our eyes.

This is the day that the Lord has made;

let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalm 118

Prayer

We will pray this prayer on Easter Sunday as we light the new Christ candle for the year.

Eternal God,
through the rising of your son from death,
you broke the power of the grave
to shape our lives;
you broke the power of death
and condemned death itself to die.
As we celebrate your triumph
may we also make it the pattern for our living.

Shine the light of Christ on us;
resurrect in our lives
faith, hope and love
as surely as you raised Jesus Christ
from death.
Amen.

Glorious Lord of life,
by the resurrection of your Christ
you overcame the old order of sin and death

to make all things new in him.
Grant that we who celebrate with joy
Christ's rising from the dead
may be freed from the bondage of sin
to life endowed by your grace;
through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen.

The prophet Isaiah 65. 17-25

For I am about to create new heavens
and a new earth;
the former things shall not be remembered
or come to mind.
But be glad and rejoice for ever
in what I am creating;
for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy,
and its people as a delight.
I will rejoice in Jerusalem,
and delight in my people;
no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it,
or the cry of distress.
No more shall there be in it
an infant that lives but a few days,
or an old person who does not live out a lifetime;
for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth,
and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed.
They shall build houses and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
They shall not build and another inhabit;
they shall not plant and another eat;
for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be,
and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.
They shall not labour in vain,
or bear children for calamity;
for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord—
and their descendants as well.
Before they call I will answer,
while they are yet speaking I will hear.
The wolf and the lamb shall feed together,
the lion shall eat straw like the ox;
but the serpent—its food shall be dust!
They shall not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain,
says the Lord.

The Acts of the Apostles

This is an account of Peter addressing the household of the Roman centurion Cornelius, following Peter's dramatic dream where 'unclean' animals are lowered from heaven in a sheet and Peter is invited to eat. The confronting vision brings him to a new comprehension of God's grace which he shares with Cornelius and family.

Then Peter began to speak to them: 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.'

The Gospel according to Luke 24. 1-12

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead?'



He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.' Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

Reflecting

Why is it that women are rarely believed? Over the last couple of years, we have heard difficult accounts from women of how they are mistreated and then disbelieved in workplaces, even the parliaments of the nation. Nothing much has changed.

Luke tells us that while the male disciples flee from the events of Jesus' trial and crucifixion, the women stay; and watch. *They* take it all in. They see all of the grizzly events as they unfold and they put the pieces together in order to understand and retell what has taken place. The two men in dazzling white tell the women what Jesus has already told the male disciples multiple times but which they have not been able to hear: *Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.* The truth is entrusted to the women. They can hear it, in spite of their state of terror.

The culture of death enacted in the crucifixion, which seeks to eradicate the Lord of Life, does not have the final say and on this morning he breaks free from the bonds of death, releasing into the world the irrepressible life of God. The culture of death which always threatens to overwhelm and consume us is defeated by God's raising of Jesus from death. Into the world is released the all-embracing grace of God. Peter shares all-embracing love of God with the household of Cornelius. In the dream given to him, he is released from his religious and nationalistic exclusivism which insisted that the Roman soldier and his family were beyond the pale.

These last weeks as the terrible events have unfolded in Ukraine, we can see the impact of strident nationalism mixed with religion – how this fosters a culture of death and destruction. This is the same strident mix of political power and religion Jesus and the disciples were terrorised by. It is the world we inhabit still. It is just that the means of death have become so much more developed and destructive in our time. These cultures of death flourish on lies.

As the women watch, as they, in spite of their fear and their own vulnerability, observe the horror of what is done to Jesus, they see the truth of what happens. To them is entrusted the news that this, though, is not the final word.

As we reread the difficult story of the Passion each year we act as witnesses to what is done to Jesus. In doing so we are then also unafraid to act as witnesses to innocent people who suffer in our own time: mistreated women, the indigenous people of our nation, the appalling plight of asylum seekers by our country, the neglect and mistreatment, the dishonouring of the elderly in our country. As people of the cross we are not afraid to look at suffering and see the possibility of resurrection, of redemption, of the lowly being lifted up. A culture of death turns away, insists on the inevitability of the situation, its necessity, that nothing can be done. As people of the

Resurrection, we can go to the gates of hell with hope and with healing balm to receive the dead and be bearers of resurrection.

On Easter morning in church, we will sing a hymn by Jock Curle which concludes with these words:

For the glory of salvation
in the dawn of Easter day
we will praise you, loving Father;
we rejoice to sing and pray
with the Son and with the Spirit.
Lead us on, your great array,
saints and sinners celebrating
your triumphant love today.

On the first Easter morning a long procession of disciples through time began with the women returning from the tomb, with the news that death and fear were not the last word that we can go to the gates of hell and come back from death. We stand in this procession of saints and sinners making our way to gates of glory celebrating the breaking through of love and the joy of being disciples of the crucified and risen one.

Christ is risen!

Prayer – prepared by Dianne Richter

At a time like this, when the triumph of death in our world seems inevitable and the suffering around us makes us want to turn away, we commit ourselves to resurrection.

Lord Jesus Christ, risen from death
We praise you for changed lives and new hopes at Easter.
You came to Mary in the garden
And turned her tears into joy.
You came to the disciples in the upper room
And turned their fear into courage.
You came to the disciples by the lakeside
And turned their failure into faith.
You came to the travellers on the Emmaus Road
And turned their despair into hope.

You come to us in our unworthiness and shame
And turn our weakness into triumph.
For your love and your mercy:
We give you thanks, O Lord.

We bring to you in prayer the many peoples whom we know are experiencing adversity and suffering in this world including:

- ❖ The people of the Ukraine
- ❖ Refugees and asylum seekers without a country to call home

- ❖ Individuals and communities living with the impacts of COVID
- ❖ People who are disconnected from their families and community by distance, estrangement, illness or death
- ❖ The First Peoples of many nations, including Australia
- ❖ People experiencing mental illness, chronic pain and other disabling conditions
- ❖ Those who are poor, homeless, hungry
- ❖ People who are experiencing grief and loss – of loved ones, relationships, jobs, homes

As you stand among us now, Jesus,
in your resurrected glory,
May we know the power of your life;
May we turn away from death;
And may we become agents of resurrection, new life, where-ever we find ourselves.

Amen

Our Father in heaven ...

Blessing

May the resurrected one call you from the tombs which hold you bound
Releasing you into the embrace of God's boundless love.
May hope be yours,
May faith be yours,
May love be yours,
This Resurrection Day and always.

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The women at the empty tomb - He Qi