

# Friday Reflection

## THEIR WORDS SEEMED LIKE NONSENSE – LANCELOT THOMAS

Luke 24: 1-12

Luke 24: "But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense."

Easter, for Christians, is the greatest celebration in the Christian Calendar. Theologians, ministers and "ordinary" Christians the world over have, for nearly 2000 years, spoken of "Easter Joy". The joy the early Church felt, remembering the morning when a brown, oppressed man, tortured and murdered by the establishment, walked out the grave. A statement so profound that even the powerful chose to follow him, and hero worship him, to the point that the original, radical statement was lost in the pomp and celebration.

Easter Joy is eerily absent this year. The death and confusion caused by the Covid-19 virus has closed churches, businesses and homes alike. The God of Life, that conquered death 2000 years ago, seems to have been conquered, this time by death itself. Our ministers have retreated, to their upper room, hiding from this new power, singing praise of their hero now only recalled in legend through the windows of the internet. A hero lost, but, we pray, will soon return.

This sense of defeat and loss must have been the overriding emotion of the first Easter. Life had been conquered by death. Hope had been crushed by oppression. And on the tragic first Easter morning, the brave women went to the tomb, and found that even the physical touch of their saviour had disappeared. The tomb was empty and Jesus was gone. For many Christians, earnestly seeking Christ the Liberator, this Jesus too seems lost. A phantom of someone's imagination. Slowly, more and more people are questioning if this Jesus was not just some pious dream.

When I went to one of the Sites last week, I felt the Joy that the women at the tomb must have felt on the first Easter morning. When I met the site manager and Stephan, sitting among their homeless brothers in Oosterlig Church, I felt that I had entered the tomb, but instead of finding death, I encountered Life. At a time when my own church has closed and has forced the closure of all the organisations that can assist our most vulnerable, hiding themselves in their upper room, I again encountered the heroes that Christ called us to be. You are those heroes.

I now know what the first women who witnessed the resurrection must have felt, because I ran to share with friends and prayer groups, that I have met the Christ, and Jesus is truly risen. The response was like the 11 disciples, this "words seem like nonsense". Because the Jesus of the sites looks different, sounds different and smells different to what we want Jesus to be.

A Franciscan Friend of mine told me, "Ahh Lance, if only I could feel at peace with our church's role and mission! I keep saying that it is not enough for a Christian to isolate, lock the doors and avoid the virus. Where's the witness aspect in that? We should be feeding, nurturing & nourishing the 'church' in lockdown and preparing them for the new church that is struggling to emerge. But yoh, we treat it

like a holiday and 'TV' opportunities.... I guess we have the Pope for it - who is ready and willing and who for the first time has a strong enough, visible, grassroots community behind him - maybe this will give him the strength to ignore those intransigent fuddy-duddy bishops surrounding him and move with the 'sheep'."

I want to thank all of you for making my Easter Real again. I might not have been able to attend the usual Easter vigil in my Catholic church, but this year, with all the Churches closed I met the risen Christ once again in you. I know the many personal sacrifices you make on a daily basis to be present in these sites. I know the interpersonal struggles you go through with family and friends. I know the struggle you might sometimes feel to just stay in bed with lockdown like the rest of the country. What you do might sound like madness to some, but to me, and many like me, you make Christ real. And for that I thank you.

***Let us pray:***

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,  
Grant that I may not so much seek  
To be consoled as to console;  
To be understood, as to understand;  
To be loved, as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;  
It is in pardoning, that we are pardoned;  
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.