

Fr Hoyal Writes

THE TRUE RESURRECTION

“We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.” So we say in the Creed at Mass. But do we? I hope so.

For some centuries people, immensely clever people too, have spent considerable energies seeking to explode the resurrection of Christ, and this pursuit continues as popular as ever. Of course, the fact that they are still at it itself casts doubt on their case. The current vociferousness of the New Atheists is irksome, but it should also encourage us.

Certainly, there remains much to be said for Thomas Arnold’s remark: “I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair enquirer, than the great sign which God has given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead.” Arnold (d 1842) deserves attention; the famous Headmaster of Rugby was later Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford.

In this vein I am very much with the distinguished New Testament theologian, the late C F D Moule, who wrote that “The birth and rapid rise of the Christian Church ... remain an unsolved enigma for any historian who refuses to take seriously the only explanation offered by the Church itself.”

Yet I know that many remain unconvinced albeit, Thomas Hardy fashion, often “hoping it might be so”.

Perhaps evidence from Christian life and experience can tip the balance. Very recently I came across the name of Titus Brandsma,

a Roman Catholic monk, and his story may be of help to the doubtful. In what follows I am indebted to an article by Ron Atkin in a recent newsletter of The Association of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

Born in 1881 at Bolsward in the Netherlands, Brandsma joined the Carmelite order and was ordained to the priesthood in 1905. Embarking upon an academic career, he obtained a doctorate in philosophy after studies in Rome. Returning to the Netherlands he taught at several schools. He was eventually appointed Professor of Philosophy and the History of Mysticism at the Catholic University of Nijmegen, later becoming the Rector of the university. During this period he wrote many books. In 1935 he was appointed advisor to the bishops for Catholic journalists.

Both before and during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands, Brandsma used the gospels to condemn Nazi ideology and he defended the right to freedom of education and freedom of the press. This he did quite openly, making himself a conspicuous target.

When the Catholic hierarchy announced that the sacraments were to be denied to those who supported the Nazis and the Catholic Press refused to print Nazi propaganda, Brandsma became increasingly exposed to the fury of the regime.

This was particularly so, because it was Brandsma who had delivered the letters ordering Catholic editors not to print official Nazi publications, as required to do by the occupying power.

The crunch came on Sunday 26 January 1942, when a letter was read out in all Catholic churches in the Netherlands. This letter urged Catholics not to believe Nazi propaganda, condemned the

deportation of Jews and called upon all Catholics to assist persecuted Jews.

The authors of this letter were two very brave men – Johannes de Jong, Archbishop of Utrecht, and Titus Brandsma. Archbishop de Jong managed to survive the occupation. But Brandsma was immediately arrested.

He was sent first to Scheveningen prison, and from there to Amersfoort concentration camp. He was later transferred to Dachau concentration camp, where he died by lethal injection on 26 July 1942, having been the victim of the most bestial cruelty that the Nazi regime could inflict.

Certainly a latter-day crucifixion. But who can doubt the soundness of the Church's conviction, both as to Christ's resurrection and our own, when they read the lines below? He wrote them in prison on 12 February 1942 while in Scheveningen and very aware of what horrors lay ahead of him.

A new awareness of Thy love
encompasses my heart;
sweet Jesus, I in Thee and Thou
in me shall never part.

No grief shall fall my way but I
shall see Thy grief-filled eyes;
the lonely way that Thou once walked
has made me sorrow-wise.

All trouble is a white-lit joy
That lights my darkest day;
Thy love has turned to brightest light
This night-like way.

If I have Thee alone,
The hours will bless
With still, cold hands of love
My utter loneliness.

Stay with me, Jesus, only stay;
I shall not fear
If, reaching out my hand,
I feel Thee near.

Perhaps not the greatest poetry; but, in the situation in which he wrote, a sure indication of very great faith and courage. Clearly, Blessed Titmus Brandsma lived and died in the personally experienced truth of his Lord's passion and resurrection. And who can doubt that he does not already share in the resurrection of the dead?

His example must both rebuke and inspire us. May his prayers support us as Holy Week and Easter now call us to renew our faith and trust in him who died for our sins and rose again for our justification.

With prayers and very best wishes for a holy and joyous Easter - a true resurrection,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Peter Cobb".

IN THIS MONTH ... APRIL 1986

S Theresa of Avila by Fr Peter Cobb, Vicar of All Saints' 1984 – 2002, here slightly abridged.

When I announced that I was going to give a series of addresses on the spirituality of S Theresa during Lent, I suspect many of you thought you could not imagine that a 16th century Spanish nun would have much to say to you. I hope I have persuaded at least some that she has something to say and that you might read her *Life* or *The Way of Perfection*. I have long believed that she and her one time confessor S John of the Cross were the twin spiritual giants who summed up the whole Christian tradition of prayer and spirituality in their lives and writings.

A woman of deep humanity, she knows people's difficulties in living the Christian life and trying to pray, both from her own experience and from the experience of the nuns she lived with and tried to guide. She is an extremely lively writer who uses vivid and arresting images. She is very down to earth and forthright. She has no time for what she calls 'sour faced saints', those who put off others by sanctimoniousness and self righteousness. Of one woman who seemed to be very devout, and never spoke uncharitably of anyone, but who was obsessed with what people thought of her, she said "everyone thought she was a saint but she frightened me more than any sinner I ever met."

She is very frank about her relationship with God, too. She admits that she entered the convent more out of fear of hell than out of love for God and that for some years she spent her time of prayer listening for the clock to strike. Then years later, after she has been raised to great sanctity, she tells how on a long journey to found another convent, the cart in which she was travelling overturned and she ended up in a ditch. She protested to God that it was no wonder he had so few friends if he treated them like that!

All this is perhaps to trivialise her yet it illustrates the fact that she is no insipid character but a very warm and sympathetic human being. Her mystical experiences were remarkable but she never

lost touch with ordinary Christians and she has a great gift for teaching others.

PARISH RETREAT
8 – 10 May 2009
Abbey House, Glastonbury

Our Parish Retreat to Glastonbury scheduled for February was cancelled due to heavy snow and ice. Fortunately, Abbey House had one other free weekend this year, so we booked it!

The Retreat will now go ahead with the same Conductor – Fr Richard Williams - who is the Vicar of St Mary's, Hay-on-Wye. Some of you have met Fr Williams on a Church Crawl we did along Offa's Dyke a few years ago. Also he is a trustee of the Llanthony Pilgrimage, so any of you who have been on that will know him and his black dog. (Do all Fr Richards have big black dogs, one wonders).

Glastonbury is lovely at most times of the year, but the Abbey House Gardens are particularly beautiful in early May. The cost will be £98.50 per person if we are a party of 20 or more. However, we have to pay for 20 places whatever, so the cost per person will go up if we have fewer people.

Please think seriously about joining us and put your name down on the list in the porch. If you want to know more please have a word with Liz after Mass or in the office on Thursday or Friday mornings, or email liz.badman@btinternet.com

Liz Badman

WALSINGHAM PILGRIMAGE

This year's parish pilgrimage to the lovely Norfolk village of Walsingham and the famous Shrine there of Our Lady is from Monday 5th to Friday 9th October. Once again we are combining with St Gregory's, Horfield, and will be sharing transport.

Do note the date, and if you are interested in joining us please speak to Garfield Griffiths (0117 9441035) who will be glad to give fuller information.

A mid-week pilgrimage to Walsingham is a wonderful experience, and if you haven't been before you are heartily encouraged to add your name.

ALL SAINTS with ST JOHN, CLIFTON
Holy Week & Easter 2009



PALM SUNDAY

5 April

- 8.00 am Mass & Palm Distribution
- 9.30 am PALM SUNDAY FAMILY SERVICE
- 10.45 am PALM PROCESSION & SOLEMN MASS
- 6.00 pm Evensong & Benediction

Monday in Holy Week 7.30 am & 7.00 pm Mass

Tuesday in Holy Week 10.30 am & 7.00 pm Mass

Wednesday in Holy Week 9.30 am & 7.00 pm Mass

MAUNDY THURSDAY 9 April

10.30 am Mass (for those unable to attend later)

7.30 pm SOLEMN MASS with Footwashing & Stripping of Altars - Watch till midnight

GOOD FRIDAY 10 April

10.0 am GOOD FRIDAY FAMILY SERVICE

12 noon "The Bible Via Dolorosa" - service of Good Friday devotions (Fr Richard Hoyal)

1.30 pm SOLEMN LITURGY OF GOOD FRIDAY

HOLY SATURDAY/EASTER EVE 11 April

12.00 noon Blessing of Easter Garden

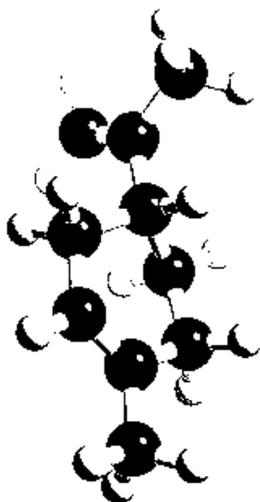
8.00 pm GREAT EASTER VIGIL,
 FIRST MASS OF EASTER
 with HOLY BAPTISM & CONFIRMATION

EASTER DAY 12 April

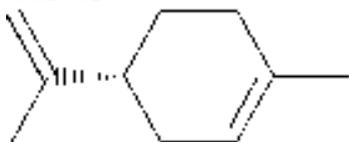
- 8.00 am Mass
- 9.30 am Short EASTER DAY FAMILY MASS
- 11.00 am PROCESSION & FESTIVAL MASS
- 6.00 pm Festival Evensong & Benediction



Molecule cocktail of the month: Myrrh



Carvol



This month's molecule is a cocktail which combine to form myrrh. Myrrh is a combination of terpenes, and is topical for for Holy Week and Easter. Myrrh resin is obtained from the bleeding of the stems of *Burseraceae oleo* and *Balsamodendron myrrha*. The best quality resins are considered to come from Somalia. It burns rather differently from frankincense, blooming and expanding rather than liquefying when heated. Myrrh oil, obtained by steam distillation of gum resins, is much easier to use. It oil contains a mixture of carvol (see above) $C_{22}H_{32}O$ pinene, heerabolene,

limonene, dipentene, eugenol, cadinene, cinnamaldehyde and cuminaldehyde. When fresh it has an agreeable spicy-medicinal smell. It is soluble in alcohol, ether and carbon bisulphide and is often mixed with an emollient base and applied as an ointment. It has been used for millennia as a medication and an embalming material.

There are archaeological records of myrrh being used topically on cancers, leprosy and on the lesions on syphilis sufferers. Mixed with coriander and honey, it was applied to herpes blisters by the ancient Egyptians. Myrrh has long been associated with the rituals of death, both in embalming ointments and as a mask to the smell of death and cremation. The Emperor Nero, known for his extravagance, was said to have burned a whole year's supply at the funeral of his second wife Poppaea. It is used as a component of incense for funeral and cremation rites and in the Eastern Orthodox churches is an essential ingredient of the oil of Christ. Western churches have switched to rather less pungent and expensive balsams.

“YES”

Sermon preached at All Saints Clifton on the Feast of the Annunciation, 25 March 2009, by the Revd Dr Simon Taylor, Priest in Charge of St Mary Redcliffe. All Saint's, Clifton.

The Mass readings were: Isaiah 7.10-14 Hebrews 10.4-10 Luke 1.26-38

Yes. It's a short word with a lot of power. Yes. It's a word that shapes our faith from creation to the end of everything. Yes – at the heart of our faith and our celebrations this evening is a 'yes' without which even God's plans would have come to nought.

Yes was the word God spoke in making all things. In creation, God says yes to the universe of things that are not God. In creation God affirms that what he has created is good. In the yes of creation, God opens himself to all that the creation brings with it. God's yes in creation brings the universe into being and as he continues to breathe his yes, it holds the creation in being.

Yes is what God says to his creation even though it has gone wrong in such terrible ways. God says yes to creation even as he stitches clothes for Adam and Eve to wear in their exile from the Garden of Eden. God says yes, even as he marks Cain as a murderer who is to wander the earth. God says yes to his creation as he saves it through one man, and an ark full of creatures of every kind. Yes is the cost of creation. Yes is God's love for creation.

Yes is what God says in becoming a human being and being born in Bethlehem. In Jesus, God says yes to being dependent, yes to being vulnerable, yes to being weak, yes to being unwelcome, yes to being poor, yes to being a refugee. And all this before he was two years old.

Yes is what Jesus says to those whom the religious leaders and the respectable folk kept away from the things of God. Yes to tax collectors, collaborators with the enemy. Yes to prostitutes. Yes to those with nothing to lose. Yes to those who would respond to his invitation, be they foreigners, women, the sick, the unclean, the poor and those on the outside. And he longs to say yes to the rich, the respectable and the upright, if only they will say yes to him and to those among whom he can be found.

Yes is what Jesus says even on the cross. Not my will but your will be done, he prays in Gethsemane. Yes I will be faithful to my calling. Yes I will love this world to the end, to torture and death. Yes I will embrace death as part of what it means to be human. Yes the cost of creation and the price of love will be paid in suffering what creation can do to God.

Yes is God's verdict on Jesus' life, and such a powerful yes that it even brings life out of death. Yes is the recreation, beyond death and the price of sin. Yes is the new creation to which we belong and which we proclaim to our world.

Yes is what God says to us in judging us, even as that yes purifies us, burns away all that harms us, removes all that brings death to us and to our world.

Yes is what God says to his creation, as he renews it and restores it. Yes is the new heavens and the new earth that we are promised. Yes is the great wedding banquet to which we are invited, in which Christ and his people will exchange their yes and be married.

Yes is the whole story of God's relationship to his creation. Yes is creation's beginning, preservation, redemption, re-creation, judgement and consummation. Yes is the first and the last word God speaks to us. Yes is the love with which God brings us into being, yes is the love into which he receives us at the end of our lives, and yes is the restoration of all that we are in the resurrection. Yes is all God has to say to us.

Yes is also, hesitatingly, humbly, hopefully, on the lips of Mary. 'Here I am, let it be with me according to your word'. At the heart of God's yes, there is Mary's yes. Without Mary's yes, could there have been God's yes? Without Mary's yes, would God have been able to say yes to living among us as he did?

Yes is a relationship, yes establishes trust and respect, yes opens possibilities of co-operating. Mary's yes enables God's work. Mary's yes creates a place where God comes to dwell. Mary's yes is vital to our story and to our salvation.

Yes for Mary and for God establishes and confirms a relationship of love and trust. Mary's yes and the opportunity she has to say yes, mark this story out as utterly different to the gods of Greece and Rome who rape and deceive to produce children with human mothers. Mary's yes is consent, it is agreement, it is willing and joyful. Mary's yes reveals and completes the yes of

God who created her and who through her yes will redeem her and us.

Yes stands at the heart of the marriage service. Both husband and wife have to consent to be married to one another. The marriage of God and his people is no different. God asks Mary to say yes. God asks us to say yes.

Yes takes risks. Yes leads to new horizons, but these are not always clear when we speak. Yes is the cost and the gain of love.

Yes is creative. Yes bears children with all the questions and the possibilities, all the uncertainty and all the hope that is involved in bringing any child into the world.

Yes opens doors, engenders new possibilities, offers the hope that things can change, that we can be all that God created us to be.

Yes is more powerful than no. Yes opens up; no closes down. Yes creates new things, no says we are content with what we have. Yes builds relationships, no builds walls. Yes risks love, no chooses the security of self.

Yes is our response to an invitation, to a request. We are not confronted with the demand of an angry God, but the open and patient request of our loving God.

Yes challenges us. Yes is the challenge of God and of Mary to us today. God has things to offer us, life to give us, tasks for us to share in. All we have to do is say yes.

Amen. So be it. Yes.