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A very peaceful and hope-filled Easter to all our readers! For this is the time to believe in new life, even out of death, and light, even when the darkness is still here.

Our celebration this weekend, and during the whole of Eastertime, leads us to see that Jesus rose from the dead to prove that there is no barrier to God's love for us - not even if we have let Him down, or betrayed His way of love, as the first disciples themselves did.

Despite our own terrible troubles right now, in awe and wonder we can still say (or sing!) "Alleluia" - "Praise God"- not least because He is so evidently at work in all those who are offering their own lives to care for us.

THIS POEM BY RUTH ETHELLES is an imaginary depiction of what could have happened next when Jesus rose from the dead. It may just help our Eastertime reflection on Jesus' compassion and love – **and** how we might follow His way in our own lives.

In Hell there grew a Judas Tree
Where Judas hanged and died,
Because he could not bear to see
His master crucified.
Our Lord descended into Hell
And found his Judas there,
Forever hanging on the tree
Grown from his own despair.
So Jesus cut his Judas down
And took him in his arms.
“It was for this I came” he said,
“And not to do you harm.
My Father gave me twelve good men
And all of them I kept,
Though one betrayed and one denied,
Some fled and others slept.

In three days' time I must return
To make the others glad,
But first I had to come to Hell
And share the death you had.
My tree will grow in place of yours,
Its roots lie here as well.
There is no final victory
Without this soul from Hell.”
So when we all condemned him,
As of every traitor worst,
Remember that of all his men
Our Lord forgave him first.

Monday (From the Easter Proclamation)

This is our Passover feast, when Christ, the true Lamb, is slain, whose blood consecrates the homes of all believers. This is the night when Christians everywhere, washed clean of sin, and freed from all defilement, are restored to grace and grow together in holiness. Father, how wonderful your care for us! How boundless your merciful love! To ransom a slave, you gave away your son. The power of this holy night dispels all evil, washes guilt away, restores lost innocence, brings mourners joy; it casts out hatred, brings us peace, and humbles earthly pride. Night truly blessed when heaven is wedded to earth and we are reconciled to God.

Scripture (Romans 6:3-11)

When we were baptised into Christ Jesus, we were baptised into his death. So by our baptism into his death we were buried with him, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glorious power, we too should begin living a new life; realising that our former self has been crucified with him, so that the self that belonged to sin should be destroyed and we should be freed from the slavery of sin. Now, the life that he leads is life with God. In the same way you must see yourselves as being dead to sin but alive for God in Jesus Christ.

Tuesday (Cardinal Basil Hume.)

New life has been given to us. We received it first at Baptism. That life made St. Paul say 'I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me.' Bold words but full of significance. We must not think of Christ rising from the dead and then leaving us to cope as best we can, to live as he taught us how. No, he remains with us, present always, unseen by the eyes and beyond the touch of the hand. Through our faith we come to realise more and more his presence within us and around us. Jesus Christ lives. We draw strength not from ourselves and our own resources but from faith and union with Jesus Christ.

Scripture (Ezekiel 36: 18-28)

The Lord says this: 'I am going to display the holiness of my name which you have profaned among the nations. And the nations will know that I am Yahweh when in you I display my holiness before their eyes. I shall pour clean water over you and you shall be cleansed; I shall cleanse you of all your filth and of all your foul idols. I shall give you a new heart, and put a new spirit in you. I shall remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you a heart of flesh instead. I shall put my spirit in you and make you keep my laws, and respect and practise my judgments.

Wednesday (Caryll Houselander)

I was in an underground train, a crowded train in which all sorts of people jostled together, sitting and strap-hanging – workers of every description going home at the end of the day. Quite suddenly I saw Christ in them all: living in

them, dying in them, rejoicing in them, sorrowing in them. I came out into the street and walked for a long time in the crowds. It was the same here, on every side, in every passer-by – Christ.

Scripture (Mt 28:5-10)

The angel said to the women “There is no need for you to be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen as he said he would. Come and see the place where he lay, then go quickly and tell his disciples’ He has risen from the dead and now he is going before you to Galilee; it is there you will see him!’ Filled with awe and great joy the women came quickly away from the tomb and ran to tell the disciples.”

Thursday (Sheila Cassidy)

We rush about, examining the discarded shroud, looking behind the bushes, completely ignoring the patient angel who says ‘ Why are you looking among the dead for someone who is alive?’ The rising of Christ in the Spirit and in whatever form his *new* body took, his descent among the dead and his harrowing of hell are central to our faith. Even more important, and for me totally breath-taking, is the image of the wedding of earth with heaven, the union of frail human beings with their immortal, unknowable God.

Scripture (Isaiah 54:7-10)

I did forsake you for a brief moment, but in great compassion I shall take you back. In a flood of anger, for a moment, I hid my face from you. But in everlasting love I have taken pity on you, says the Lord, your redeemer. So now I swear never to be angry with you and never to rebuke you again. For the mountains may depart, the hills be shaken, but my faithful love will never leave you and my covenant of peace with you will never be shaken.

Friday (Angela of Foligno, 1502)

When you put a hot iron in the fire it assumes the very shape and nature of the fire itself: heat, colour, strength influence, for it surrenders itself whole and entire, and not in part, yet it keeps its own substance. Just so, when the perfect fire of divine love joins the soul to God and unites with him. It casts itself into God. When it is changed into God without losing its own substance, its whole existence is altered. Then this love makes itself almost entirely Divine.

Scripture (Colossians 2:9-10,12)

In him in bodily form, lives divinity in all its fullness, and in him you, too, find your own fulfilment, in the one who is the head of every sovereign and ruling force. You have been buried with him by your baptism; by which, too, you have been raised up with him by your belief in the power of God who raised him from the dead.

Martin Bennett

And the people stayed home

And the people stayed home,
and read books, and listened, and rested,
and exercised, and made art, and played games,
and learned new ways of being, and were still,
and listened more deeply.
Some meditated, some prayed, some
danced, some met their shadows.

And the people began to think differently,
and the people healed. And, in the absence of
people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless
and heartless ways, the earth began to heal.

And when the danger passed, and the people
joined together again, they grieved their losses,
and made new choices, and dreamed new
images, and created new ways to live and heal
the earth fully, as they had been healed.

Kitty O'Meara