



Easter Reflection / Vlog for Monday of Easter Week

I went shopping to Waitrose the other day and facing me (after the mandatory queue for Coronavirus safeguarding) was a wonderful display of Italian Easter Cake, Colomba Pasquale, the 'Passover Dove' in English. Many of us will be enjoying it over Easter as we mark this great Solemnity of the Church's Year, the Resurrection of Jesus. The Dove, a Symbol of Peace, was present at the Baptism of Jesus and is a symbol of the Holy Spirit too.

Despite our not being able to attend the Easter Ceremonies over Easter, we have many opportunities to remember and celebrate the significance of this special time. In particular, it is time for families to mark the unique occasion of the Resurrection with so many customs and symbols that we can bring to life.

I remember in particular the Polish custom of the Easter Basket: a Polish Dad used to come to me, the Parish Priest, on Holy Saturday to bless the Basket: the Eggs which were hard boiled and decorated with Easter Symbols. Then there was bread, salt, sausage, green leaves. My understanding is that on Easter Sunday the Father of the family says a prayer with the family and the egg is cut up and shared. There is more to it, including spraying each other with Holy Water on Easter Monday: apparently the Priest gets his hit in first!

I spoke to the Dad some years later and I remember him saying "it is traditions like that, that can drive you back to your Faith".

The different Catholic Ethnic Communities I am relating to now on behalf of the Archbishop all have their own customs and traditions that they keep up here in the UK. For example, the Chaldean Chaplaincy, that covers people who originated in Iraq has a custom similar to that in Poland and Eastern Europe, but, in addition visiting each other's homes' and exchanging the decorated eggs, and greeting each other, is very central to their way of celebrating Easter.

Here in the UK I feel our chocolate eggs don't have the same meaning for us, but perhaps we can learn from the Diaspora Churches in our midst: the eggs are important symbols of new life that we partake of at Easter, symbols that go back to a pagan era before Christianity. This is something parents can speak of in families so easily, reinforcing the true meaning of our celebrations, with a prayer on Easter Sunday.

Sadly, another dimension of our Christian Celebration is the fact that many of our Diaspora Church Communities have worries about family back home. I was speaking with one of our Chaldean Chaplaincy members about the situation in

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Iraq: he spoke of the worries they have about the Coronavirus there and the lack of resources to tackle it, plus the political and religious persecution of Christians. Other Ethnic Communities have similar concerns, as is often highlighted by Aid to the Church in Need, a Charity that reaches out to them.

We thank God in our celebration for the new life promised us in Jesus Christ, who suffered, died and rose to new life. And, we take heart from the words of Peter at Pentecost recalled for us in the Acts of the Apostles reading on Monday of Easter Week: “you have made known the way of life to me, you will fill me with gladness through your presence”. And, we make our own in the words of Psalm 15 the one we pray at the Mass at the beginning of Easter Week:

“Preserve me God, I take refuge in you.
I say to the Lord: “you are my God”.
O Lord it is you who are my portion and cup;
It is you yourself who are my prize”.

We are conscious as the world faces the fallout from the Virus that we must take refuge in Him, with Mary at our side.

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