

“Threatened by Resurrection”

Julia Esquivel

It isn't the noise in the streets that keeps us from resting, my friend, nor is it the shouts of the young people coming out drunk from the "St. Pauli," nor is it the tumult of those who pass by excited on their way to the mountains. It is something within us that doesn't let us sleep that doesn't let us rest, that won't stop pounding deep inside, it is the silent, warm weeping of Indian women without their husbands, it is the sad gaze of the children fixed somewhere beyond memory, precious in our eyes which during sleep, though closed, keep watch, systole, diastole, awake. Now six have left us, and nine in Rabinal, and two, plus two, plus two, and ten, a hundred, a thousand, a whole army witness to our pain, our fear, our courage, and hope! What keeps us from sleeping is that they have threatened us with Resurrection! Because every evening though weary of killings, an endless inventory since 1954, yet we go on loving life and do not accept their death! They have threatened us with Resurrection. Because we have felt their inert bodies, and their souls penetrated ours doubly fortified, because in this marathon of Hope, there are always others to relieve us who carry the strength to reach the finish line which lies beyond death. They have threatened us with Resurrection because they will not be able to take away from us their bodies, their souls, their strength, their spirit, nor even their death and least of all their life. Because they live today, tomorrow, and always in the streets baptized with their blood, in the air that absorbed their cry, in the jungle that hid their shadows, in the river that gathered up their laughter, in the ocean that holds their secrets, in the craters of the volcanoes, Pyramids of the New Day, which swallowed up their ashes. They have threatened us with Resurrection because they are more alive than ever before, because they transform our agonies and fertilize our struggle, because they pick us up when we fall, because they loom like giants before the crazed gorillas' fear. They have threatened us with Resurrection because they do not know life (poor things!) That is the whirlwind which does not let us sleep, the reason why sleeping, we keep watch, and awake we dream. No, it's not the street noises, nor the shouts from the drunks in the "St. Pauli, nor the noise from the fans at the ball park. It is the internal cyclone of kaleidoscopic struggle which will heal that wound of the quetzal fallen in Ixcán, it is the earthquake soon to come that will shake the world and put everything in its place. No, brother, it is not the noise in the streets which does not let us sleep. Join us in this vigil and you will know what it is to dream! Then you will know how marvelous it is to live threatened with Resurrection! To dream awake, to keep watch asleep, to live while dying, and to know ourselves already resurrected! (1980)

“When We Touch Reality”

“My Lord and My God!”

John 20:31

These things did Thomas count as real;
The warmth of blood, the chill of steel,
The grain of wood, the heft of stone,
The last frail twitch of flesh and bone.

The vision of his skeptic mind
Was keen enough to make him blind
To any unexpected act,
Too large for his small world of fact.

His reasoned certainties denied
That one could live when one had died,
Until his fingers read like Braille
The markings of the spear and nail.

Thomas H. Troeger

Last words from the dying lips of our loved ones forever remain close to us, on our hearts and in our minds. After their death we find ourselves speaking these same last words over and over, firmly impressing the sound of them within. They never really shake loose from us. According to the gospel writer John, the last words Jesus uttered were “It is finished” (19:30). Scholars tell us that he used the impersonal ‘it’ instead of the personal pronoun ‘I’ because he wants us to understand something about the work of Jesus. John wants our faith to know that Jesus was God’s Word Made Flesh come to live God’s life giving story of love for all creation. Jesus wasn’t about himself---Jesus was all about being the Living Word of God which calls people into the fullness of their humanity. On Good Friday the last words his friends heard him say were, ‘It is finished.’ Easter however, gave the Risen Jesus a forty day window to add on a P.S., P.P.S, and P.P.S. So on the evening of the first day of the week, the resurrected Jesus entered into the doubts and fears that kept his friends locked up behind

closed doors and said: "It is finished, but I am not!" Touch me, it's me!" *'Jesus' bodily resurrection from the dead'* wrote Biblical scholar Gary Habernaus, *'was the central proclamation of the early church from the very beginning . . .'* (from *Case for Christ*, by Lee Strobel) For Thomas it took a lot of tracing and probing of the scars on Jesus' resurrected hands and feet for doubt to yield to faith in bodily resurrection. It took God's Loving Spirit of Forgiveness and Peace breathing the Life of God into him for Thomas to get in touch with deep down Soul Reality and exclaim: "My Lord and My God!" "My Lord and My God!" Like Thomas we claim and internalize this faith in our singing of 'Lord of the Dance,' verse 5: They cut me down and I leapt up high; I am the life that'll never, never die: I'll live in you if you'll live in me: I am the Lord of the Dance said he. The Buddhist call the spiritual dynamic of me living in you and you living in me: Interbeing.

In the final chapter of his book, 'Active Life,' Palmer Parker offers some additional insight into the meaning of bodily resurrection and interbeing. "When we envision a horizon that holds the hope of life, we are free to act without fear, free to act in truth and love and justice today because those very qualities seem to shape our own identity. . . I have sometimes feared life itself, and the movement toward new life, more than I have feared death in its various forms. . . Death in various forms is sometimes comforting, while resurrection and new life can be demanding and threatening. If I lived as if resurrection were real, and allowed myself to die for the sake of new life, what might I be called upon to do? On the one hand, we fear the killers, but not simply because they want to kill us. We fear them because they test our convictions about resurrection, they test our willingness to be brought into a larger life than the one we know. On the other hand, we fear the innocent victims of the killers, those who have died for love and justice and peace. Though they are our friends, we fear them because they call us to follow them in 'this marathon of Hope.'" If we were to take their calling seriously, we ourselves would have to undergo some form of dying. So we huddle together in our conspiracy of silence, trying to ignore both the death and their murders, trying to ignore the ambiguous call of the new life that lies beyond death. For Esquivel, there is no

resurrection of isolated individuals. She is simply not concerned about private resurrection, yours or mine or her own. Each of us is resurrected only as we enter into the network of relationships called community, a network that embraces not only living persons but people who have died, and nonhuman creatures as well. Resurrection has personal significance—if we understand the person as a communal being—but it is above all a corporate, social and political event, an event in which justice and truth and love come to fruition. . . if we try to gain life by denying death, the paradoxical result is that we become lifeless. This is why "disillusionment" is so important, for by losing our illusions we can tap the energy of the reality that lies beyond them. Once we are thoroughly disillusioned we can say, with Thoreau, "Reality is fabulous!" No matter how difficult reality may be, it contains more life than any illusion. . . The reality is that sooner or later all we have will be taken from us by death. But if we can live with the threat of resurrection in our bones, then we will live truly and well. Then we will join in a corporate witness that is immortal, a witness that is only strengthened by the forces of death, a witness that is in itself the resurrection life. For many of us, the life we need to lose is the life lived in the image of the autonomous self, and the life we shall then find is that of the self embedded in community---a community that connects us not only to other people but the natural world as well. No wonder resurrection is threatening . . .

Because the Church Universal calls itself, The Body of Christ." one of my favorite prayers for gathering at the Lord's Table in Remembrance of the Resurrected Christ comes from Ann Weems.

Holy Communion

Eat. Drink. Remember who I am.

Eat. Drink. Remember who I am so that you can remember who you are.

Eat. Drink. Remember who I am so you can remember who I am so you can remember who you are and tell the others.

Eat. Drink. Remember who I am so you can remember who you are and tell the others so that God's people can live in communion . . . in holy communion. Amen.

Prayer. "Our Lord and Our God," as we live in you and you live in us, heal our wounds and make the face of this congregation shine with the glory of your resurrected Christ. Amen.