



“Easter is not simply a day of celebration: It is, as well, a day of decision. What is really to be decided is whether or not we ourselves will rise from the deadening grip of this world’s burnt-out systems to the light-giving time of God’s coming again, this time in us.” (Joan Chittister, *Ideas in Passing* 2010)

Our world is in the grip of many death-dealing forces – rampant violence against women, powerlessness of heavily-indebted countries and corruption of governments, drug cultures that rob people of their dignity, gross labour and sexual exploitation of trafficked human beings, the scandal of hunger in a first world country like Ireland to name a few. Our Church is riven with other negative forces – the disgrace of sexual abuse, financial impropriety and misuse of power, the systemic exclusion of women and a culture of aloofness and superiority. How do we rise from these deadening forces and make a conscious decision to be light-bearers who believe in the Risen Jesus?

We can but hope that the drama of the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI and the accession of a new pontiff might signal a change at the centre of our Church governance and that some trust and credibility, coupled with a spirit of humility, be restored to its public image. In Australia there is a glimmer of light in the apologetic and repentant tone of the Lenten pastoral letter of the New South Wales Bishops in response to the Royal Commission on Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse, *“Sowing in Tears”*.

However when we burrow down to the everyday, we can take hope in the pockets of goodness and kindness that we meet and hear about: the outreach and smiling faces of cooks and carers who come into our homes; the generosity of parishioners reaching out to a young mother with cancer; the patience and compassion of those who volunteer with Very Special Kids (supporting children with illnesses); the tradesman who gives a young lad with a mild disability a chance of training; the grandmother who accompanies women at the Family Court; the skilled advocacy of pro-bono lawyers to *government on behalf of asylum seekers*. *The list could go on. People letting each other know that they matter – light-givers of today.* Recently we had a wonderful example of intergenerational learning when eighty student leaders from the nine Brigidine schools across Australia came together for the annual Justice and Democracy Forum. They were bubbling and enthusiastic as they learned about human trafficking through modern technology and through interaction with equally passionate women religious from several congregations – all of them of retirement age. Here was energy and light attacking a pernicious systemic injustice!

Hope is generated when talking and agreeing about what really matters and needs to change, moves beyond talk to action. Stepping out of our comfort zone to make changes for the sake of a better life for others is exemplified so powerfully in the dying, entombment and rising of Jesus. Easter offers us an invitation to move through the tomb-like times of life and ‘decide to rise ... to the light-giving time of God’s coming again, in ourselves’ and for others.

Peace and blessings as we celebrate Easter with Jesus who is interconnected with all life, with transformation and with possibilities of life beyond our imaginings.