

May I speak in the name of God, Giver, Forgiver and Lover. Amen.

It has been said satirically that a Christian is someone who has to believe three impossible things before breakfast. As one who has already had his breakfast I can say that there is an element of truth to this. For today we remember what has to be one of the most impossible Christian beliefs of all, the resurrection.

I say impossible advisedly. After all, medics and philosophers are equally quick to point out that the human body does not tend to revive itself after suffering the severe trauma of a crucifixion. And whatever else you may or may not believe about Jesus, we know that he was crucified. We know that it is one of the least pleasant ways to die. And yet today we are not in mourning for a lost cause, rather today we are joyful and in good cheer, ready to consume large amounts of chocolate. For today we celebrate how for God the impossible is not only possible: it happens.

But that is only half of the story. If the resurrection is just an eerily unusual event that we struggle to explain, then I doubt most of us would be here. There are plenty of other inexplicable events that logic has not explained and they tend not to have a hold on us. While we might wonder about UFOs and the existence of alien life on other planets, these are things that are speculative, interesting for some to be sure, but not part of our realm of everyday experience.

When it comes to the resurrection, we are asked to believe that Christ's conquest of death is more than just an intriguing proposition that may at some future time be verified. Given enough time and enough experience of the cosmos we presumably will be able to discover whether there are little green men and women living billions of light years away. But however much time passes science will never be able to verify the resurrection.

Unlike belief in and arguments for UFOs or aliens, the resurrection is a belief not about the external world. It is also a belief about the inner workings of the human heart. And in celebrating Christ's conquest of death, we are celebrating the triumph of God over all the forces that dehumanize our human life.

The satirical writer who jested about believing three impossible things before breakfast knew this. She knew all about the darker side of human nature, as she was one of that most precious of individuals: a writer of mysteries, specifically fictional detective stories. As a detective writer, Dorothy Sayers knew what kind of terrible things human beings could do to one another. And she enjoyed creating plots that eventually unraveled, with the villains getting their comeuppance.

The issue for us, today, though, is whether the resurrection is more than just a work of detective fiction that we will eventually unravel. Clearly there is something of the detective genre in the resurrection accounts. Who rolled the stone away for instance? And why did some recognize Jesus and some not?

But while these are important questions, they are mere clues that have the potential to be red herrings. For the truth of the matter is resurrection only makes sense if one recognizes that the story of Jesus is part of a wider narrative.

While the narrative arc of the story of God's relationship with humanity climaxes in the resurrection, Easter only makes sense if we first understand the origins of the story. And that means

viewing the resurrection episode within the context of the wider theme of God's persistent love for humanity.

Few of us open a mystery or thriller at the end to see first how the story concludes before deciding whether to read through the whole thing. In the same way, Christians are asked to remember that resurrection does not even begin to make sense until we immerse ourselves within the story of God's love for humanity.

Separated from the context of God's many attempts to reconcile human beings with one another resurrection is no more significant than a party trick. But understood as the culminating movement of God reaching out in love to humankind we can begin to see that the resurrection is not just about Jesus – it is also about ourselves. For in resurrection we are reminded that nothing can separate God from us.

I hope that this Easter you are discovering you have questions about that. I hope that you do not think everything fits neatly into place. And I hope that above all you will see the church as a place to explore, debate and refine your questions. For if Jesus is one to go by, as I believe he is, God has a particular love for questions and those who question.

Ultimately, the only way to verify the resurrection this year will be in the life choices and decisions that each of us make. If we were all to hold off responding to God's call to love our fellow human beings before we could decide exactly what happened to the bones of Jesus that first Easter, Christianity would have failed long ago.

But as things are, God draws us together and closer to God in ways more numerous than we can ever imagine. Whatever it is that has brought you here today, know that God is already nearer than you can possibly imagine. And while we have gathered to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, I hope you will go from here celebrating your own resurrection. While God is the author of our salvation, each of us has to plot out what God means in our lives. We may not all be thriller writers, but we have to recognize that our lives are stories that only we can write. And if we can but try and trust in the risen Christ the writings of our lives will radiate truth, justice, compassion, mercy, hope, and above all love.

So be merry, rejoice, and allow the new life that comes from God to flow through you. And remember that however impossible Christianity sounds, where you love and care for others you will find God. Amen.