

Views from the Pews: Easter Day

Lenten observance is much less commonly practiced these days than formerly. There are good arguments to regard this relaxation of traditional disciplines as a welcome relief, a rejection of older, more punitive attitudes. But then we miss the joyful relief that accompanies escape from any intense deprivation, sorrow or anxiety, which tends to be greatest for those who have suffered most beforehand. Our celebration of the Resurrection today is the same.

Surely, the one who knew more about that cataract of contradictory emotions than any of us ever could must be Mary, the first uncomprehending, overwhelmed witness to the resurrected Jesus. We can never understand what actually happened, but the story is loaded with symbolic significance. His appearing, in a garden on earth to the woman who had the strength and vision to prepare his body for burial, symbolised his undoing of the grief caused by another woman in another garden in Eden, who had not had the strength to resist temptation. His love and forgiveness embraced them both.

Kim King

Easter Hymn to St Mary Magdalen

She, Mary, who extravagantly broke
Her costly treasure, alabaster box,
She, Magdalen,
In desolation in that early dawn
Seeking in secret, searching out the tomb,
Somehow, someday, her sorrow to assuage,
She, Magdalen, she in the garden saw,
She first, she, - ah! – the Resurrection saw,
And spoke, she first of all,
Rabboni, Lord, her heartbreak and her love.

And then –

The April rain, the morning sun, and joy,
And joy and joy and overmastering joy
Of love accepted, love returned to earth,
In lilies no more Lenten, birds
All, Glory, Glory, Glory calling, she
Alone quite speechless for her pain,
Her not-to-be-appeasèd pain, of love,
The everlasting Easter of the heart.

Katharine Watson (1918-2008)