

The Day Before Easter



By Anna Von Reitz

The day before Easter, Jesus is dead. It's the Sabbath. The entire City of Jerusalem is quiet as the day dawns. For most people on that sunny spring day, it was just another Sabbath and the quiet was just the normal peace of the Sabbath.

For a certain family and a small circle of friends, the quiet was of a different kind: a stunned and horrified silence, the kind where your mind reels and you can't say anything, because there is nothing to say--and nothing to do. He's dead.

So you sit hunched over with your stomach muscles knotted up against the pain and you hug yourself and all you can think is -- how could this happen? How could this possibly be?

And even though you were there, it doesn't seem real.

One moment, he's lauded and praised-- hosannah in the highest!--and the next moment, this dull blank horror. This nothingness.

Mary, his Mother, is prostrate with grief. The rest of the family gathers around her, but it's no good. There is nothing anyone can say. She knots her hands together and weeps until she is exhausted and falls asleep, only to awaken to this nightmare and weep again.

Nothing will ever be the same. Nothing will ever be as good.

And what about all God's promises and the prophets now? What about the miracles?

It all comes down to this today: he's dead. He's gone. He will never laugh with us again, never play, never stop to comfort some poor beggar, never touch another leper.

The heaviness of it is unbearable. And underlying the thick miasma of shock and loss, is fear. The Chief Priests and the Romans are vengeful. Who will be next?

We have heard about the strange thing that happened in the temple, how the temple curtain, a very thick and heavy curtain, was torn in two by unseen hands, just ripped asunder like a piece of paper.

Dully, we wonder how that could happen, too, and what does it mean? God has left the temple? The Holy of Holies stands open to the breeze. There is nothing the Priests can do.

The divorce is final.

Furtively, we think back on all the things he said. Pictures of him, little snippets, the sound of his voice-- and we crunch up and weep again until our sides ache, until we can't catch our breath.

It seems that except for the little group keeping watch over Mary, we've all crawled away to our own spot to grieve, some upstairs, some downstairs, some in the garden, some on the city wall, some lingering in the street, flaccid as empty sacks.

He loved us. For a while in this turbulent world, we felt loved. We felt secure. We felt hopeful. Excited. And now this. He's dead and nothing will ever be the same again.

The brutal, arrogant Romans won, and the worst of it is that our own people betrayed him to the Romans. The Chief Priests. The Pharisees. The Scribes. The Levites. All those we were taught to respect and trust, our leaders, betrayed him and betrayed us.

It seems that there will be no tomorrow. It seems like this day will never end. It drags on so slowly, it seems as if time itself has stopped, and we are stuck just staring at the wall, alone with this great gaping emptiness, wavering back and forth between numbness and waves of grief.

Drawing a deep breath is so difficult to do without choking, as if even our lungs have shrunk down to nothing, and over and over we tell ourselves-- so this is how it ends.

Shame, disgrace, and torture, the death of a criminal, accused of being a necromancer who brought the dead back to life, mocked as a failed king. Scourged, stabbed, and crucified.

For what? For the sin of helping the helpless. For restoring the blind and the sick?

Wildly, like birds, our thoughts dart back and forth. It can't be the end. Yet, it is.

It's spring. All over the countryside the grass is green again, the trees are blossoming. It doesn't seem possible. It doesn't seem real. Any moment, we will hear his voice in the courtyard and the noisy entourage of disciples and crowds of people who always follow him, seeking help.

Where are they now? Cowed down in despair. The light and the hope has guttered out. Nobody can replace him. Nobody can help. Now, more than ever before, we feel alone, disoriented, knocked sideways--and empty.

So empty.

It's the day before Easter.

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