

Walking the Way of Jesus: Death and Resurrection, Recurring

Normally, I am very sceptical when it comes to celebrity endorsements of products, especially books. I think to myself, why should I be bothered if a Z-list TV reality star is promoting something or other. So, imagine my surprise when I realised that on the front cover of a book that I was reading recently had the words of lead singer of the rock band U2, Bono, emblazoned on it, stating "I cannot put this book down". The book in question is entitled *The Universal Christ* written by Richard Rohr, an American Franciscan priest, teacher and author, and it is about sacred solidarity, divine indwelling, God incarnate.

Rohr argues that while Jesus is the expression of the divine in specific, temporal, and personal ways – ways witnessed in the story of Jesus of Nazareth – 'Christ' is about the sacred known in the universal, the all-embracing, and the inclusive. Therefore, to view life in terms of Jesus Christ is to realise that God is in the particular and the overarching, God is in the contextual and global, God is now and always.

If we reflect on what is often considered to be significant art, literature and music, writes Richard Rohr, then there is a certain focus on the themes of suffering and love, that is life-denying and life-affirming, or death and resurrection. Yet, somehow, most people are unprepared for both: "But apart from love and suffering, both of which are always underserved, I see no other way that humans would recalibrate, reset, or change course. Why should we?" (Rohr, Richard, *The Universal Christ*, London: SPCK, 2019, p.p.83-84)

The fact of the matter is that death and resurrection are not only experiences in the one and only 'Jesus Story', but they are also recurring in the life of humanity and the whole of creation, which Rohr calls the 'Christ Story'.

In Paul's letters to the first Christian communities the human story of Jesus is elevated to universal heights. The themes of love, forgiveness, reconciliation and grace - that would be later recorded in the Gospels as incidents in Galilee and Judea of the 1st century - were written large by Paul as cosmic truths. Thus, death and resurrection are not confined to one individual life but are recurring in the whole of life itself.

Think of it, the cycle of the seasons, and even our breathing out and in, are signs of decline and revival, of decay and rebirth, of death and resurrection. As Paul wrote to the church in Corinth: "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.

For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:20-22)

For all of us, death and resurrection are experienced in the midst of life, which means that they are recurring realities of suffering and love. While both of these realities are always underserved, they are also the source of hope, renewal and liberation. Yes, the Easter story of Jesus Christ is lived in us (our communities, society and world) each and every day - when we realise that then New Life is surely ours.

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