

The Only Way Out Is Through

When I was Anglican Chaplain to the University of Reading many years ago I remember seeing a poster on the wall of the University Counsellor's office, which showed one of those coastal cliff scenes where the sea has worn a hole through the projecting rock formation to form an arch. The caption underneath read: "The only way out is through". It was an appropriate symbol and message for those seeking help and advice from the counselling service. Usually the only way to resolve the issues you are facing is by steadily, and sometimes painfully, working through them, confronting what is challenging you and learning to deal with perhaps deep-seated compulsions and fears.

That poster is an appropriate symbol for the current crisis we are living through. Much as we would love the government and the scientists to produce a vaccine tomorrow, release us from the lock-down, and get the economy moving again, we know that this is a process that will take time, and that we will have to live with the presence of the virus in our midst for some time, with all the constraints that entails. The situation demands patience, self-control, and a large degree of personal and spiritual resilience.

And that is where the message of the poster holds a deeper meaning which points to the events of this Holy Week, as we follow Jesus on his journey to Jerusalem, through betrayal, trial, the agony of the Cross, and beyond, to Resurrection and New Life. As we follow the drama of Our Lord's death we see him nerving himself to accept that "the only way out is through", the only way to resolve the dilemma of the human condition is through death on the Cross and the New Life that it will bring. Following the Way of the Cross we find that we are not merely spectators of an epic drama of events long ago, but rather we are participating in the central mystery of human life. Jesus accepted human death so that we in turn might identify ourselves with him and share his risen life. Jesus' death and resurrection sums up the human condition, its struggle, its pain, its potential and its joy, and confirms the ultimate victory over the limitations of life and death. Now, more than ever, we need to hold on to that truth, so that walking ourselves in the way of the Cross, we may find it to be none other than the way of life and peace. For human beings needing a sign-post in times of confusion, for our world in the midst of the coronavirus crisis, and for God's redemptive plan for His world, "The only way out is through".

The Venerable David Meara, 6th April 2020