

OIKOUMENE

Tasmanian Council of Churches

Easter 2018

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The 'Lund' Principle

Should not the churches act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately?

In Marks gospel we read these distressing last words uttered by Jesus, one of few words in the bible that are specifically recorded in Jesus' own language of Aramaic. "Eloi, Eloi, Lema Sabachthani?" meaning; My God, My God, why have you forsaken me? I reflected on these words as I was participating in a retreat day for Anglicare held at St Raphael's church on Kunanyi/ Mt Wellington. Among those beautiful surroundings I came to think that Christians would have great difficulty uttering that feeling out loud. Because deep down we know that God has not really forsaken us. Yet the words are very confronting, it feels as if we are uttering an insult to God would speak the feeling out loud, as if we wouldn't trust him.

And as Jesus breathed his last the curtain in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. As Jesus calls out one final time, the spirit of God is set free.

When we do dare to call out to God, do we really want to him to show himself? When we feel forsaken, do we dare to let him rip open the curtain behind which we've put him?

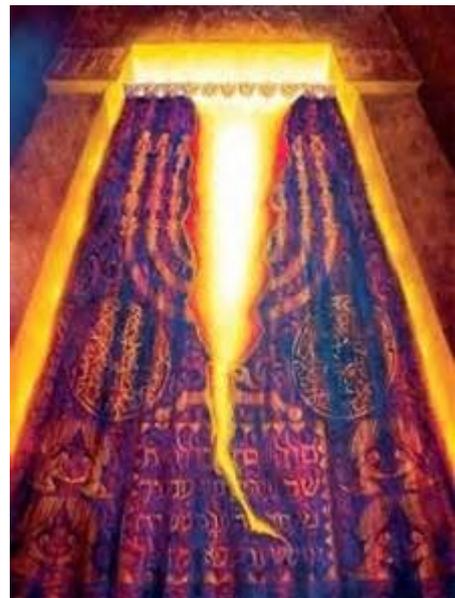
I used to think of the curtain as some very light, almost illuminating material. A thin layer of silk that was slightly see through and rippled in the wind. But then someone asked me what sort of curtain it was, "it probably must have been something quite heavy she said". And suddenly the image I had of this ethereal living curtain changed and I realised it is much more realistic to think of the curtain as an incredibly heavy thick and dusty curtain behind which nothing at all is visible. I couldn't help but think, "when we feel forsaken do we not also hide our God behind a curtain"?

What curtains do we put him behind? Do we really dare to call out to him in despair and invite him to rip apart the curtain of our own prejudice? Do we really want to see God as he truly is or do we prefer for him to stay hidden behind our curtains neatly kept in a little box?

Merciful God, in calling out to you in our despair tear the curtain, behind which we've put you, apart so that we may truly know you and your Spirit may be free to spread your light throughout the world.

Amen

Frederik Mul Executive Officer



Catholic

In recent years there has been a considerable number of new film releases based on comic book heroes and heroines from both Marvel and DC Comics. One of the most popular characters is Superman, who has been given a contemporary makeover in the series of movies that began with Man of Steel, released in 2013. A significant feature of these films has been the effort to provide insight into the origins of the particular characters in order to show the reasons and motivations for their commitment to serving the human race. Indeed Superman's 'S' on his costume, we are told, is his people's symbol for hope. So why do these Superheroes commit themselves to save the human race?

These Superheroes are all dedicated to the cause of right. They have to contest with evil powers which are well beyond the capacity of ordinary humans. In the course of their efforts to protect and save the human race, these Superheroes have accepted struggle and suffering. They have been prepared to sacrifice their own security for the greater good. They have acted as self-sacrificing saviours of humanity. In this way, these characters and the stories of their exploits reflect something of the Christian story.

Christianity understands that God created us in an act of love and endowed us with great dignity as we were created "in the image and likeness of God". We were given authority over all creation, and an eternal destiny awaits us. However, humanity chose a path of disobedience to God and so evil entered the world. We lost the integrity of the relationship with God, between human beings and between human beings and nature. Ever since, the human race has been plagued with suffering and the experience of evil. These destructive elements are not able to be overcome through purely human effort. At the personal and the social level, evil and its great array of manifestations has blighted human existence.

Humanity needed a definitive saving action to redeem this situation. As in the comic book scenarios, the human race needed a superhero. The human race was in need of a saviour. Someone was needed to overcome the powers of darkness, of evil, and sin. In a most extraordinary act, God sent a saviour, His only Son. This is the Christian story.

Christ came not with display of power, but in a profound humility that would ultimately lead to accepting the degradation of death by crucifixion. It was the ultimate act of self-sacrifice. The

resurrection of Christ was the vindication of this selfless love of Christ. Christ conquered not only evil but its ultimate power to destroy human life. The difference between Christ and the comic book heroes, apart from the fact he is a real person, is that His victory was absolute. Evil was conquered once and for all. Evil still exists in the world but it will not triumph in the end.

This Easter, as the Christian world celebrates the resurrection of Christ, it is good to reflect on the Christian story as the story of the salvation of the human race from the powers of evil. The Resurrection of Christ is the definitive act which has ensured that good will triumph in the end. We live in the knowledge that the devil will not be victorious.

As Christians we live with the awareness that evil will not triumph and that a final victory is assured. We live with hope and confidence in the future. We Christians can have an abiding spirit of joy because humanity has been saved.

Archbishop Julian Porteous

Uniting Church

"The Easter story is an outrageous love story of a Creator God who wants to reconcile the brokenness of Creation and make peace," said Mr McMillan. "Easter is a chance for new beginnings. It's our chance personally and in many ways, it's our chance as a nation to rise above the narrowness of our media and politics and defeat hatred and injustice with love and compassion."

Mr McMillan delivered the message with Rev. Gaby Kobrossi of Bankstown District Uniting Church, who has been ministering to many refugees who have settled in the Bankstown area. In the message Rev. Kobrossi describes English as a second language classes, one of several services his Church provides to new migrants.

"As a Christian, as a Church this is part of our ministry, part of our role," said Rev. Kobrossi. "During this Easter, during this Lent season, it will be really wonderful to say to these people, welcome." The Australian Government announced in September 2015 that 12,000 additional humanitarian places would be made available in response to the conflicts in Syria and Iraq. Last month the Government confirmed that all additional 12,000 visas had now been granted. More than 6,000 refugees from Syria and Iraq have settled near Bankstown over the last 12 months, so many newcomers are dealing with the pressures of resettlement.

In his Easter message Mr McMillan also describes a recent church partner visit he made to Lebanon, where that country is struggling to cope with almost two million displaced people from the ongoing conflict across its

borders. "We met a compassionate community working together with leaders of other faiths and their government to meet the needs of so many," said Mr McMillan.

"The full extent of God's love was clearly at work and being shared without favour. "I pray for all peoples wherever they may be who have been displaced by conflict. "I pray for the Christian Churches of the Middle East."And I pray that we in Australia, with them all, would know anew the full extent of God's love this Easter," said Mr McMillan.

More than half the refugees living in Lebanon are children, with almost half of them aged 6-14 out of school. In response to the crisis, the Uniting Church's relief and development agency UnitingWorld has launched an appeal to help Syrian children get back in school. UnitingWorld is working with the Middle East Council of Churches and local churches in Lebanon, to support church-run schools provide education for more refugee children.

Rev. Joseph Kassab of the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon says the schools cater for students of all backgrounds and religions. "Students learn to live together in respectful, tolerant and harmonious relationships," said Rev. Kassab. "They learn to live in communities, diverse but united. That's what Syria needs, and what the world needs – people who seek to live together respectfully, tolerant of difference."

Anglican Church

"Easter Sunday falls on April Fool's Day this year. I am guessing that for many, to speak about the resurrection of a man from the dead sounds like the ultimate April Fool's joke!

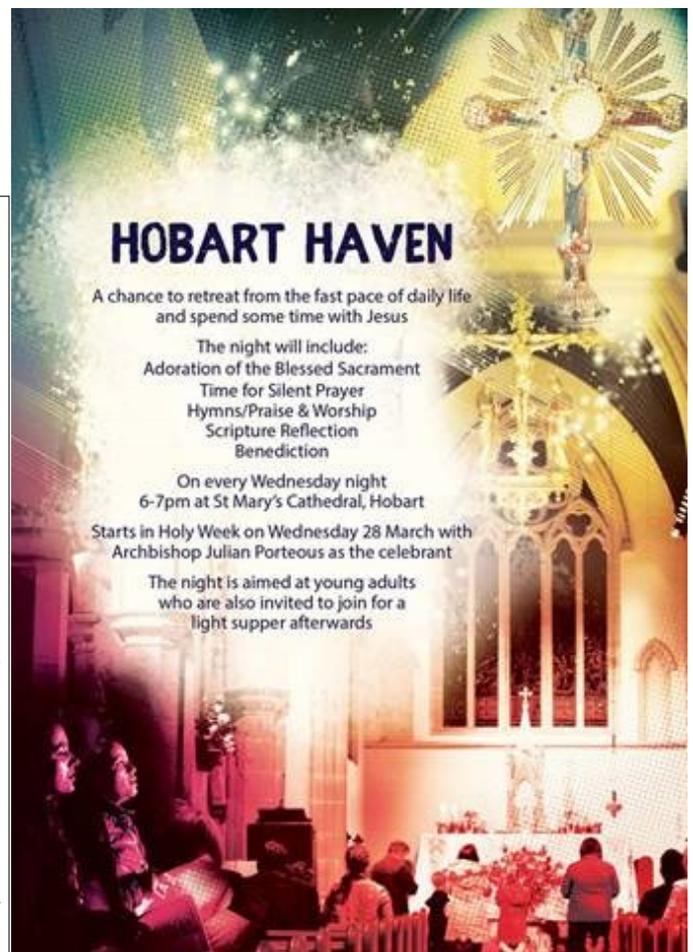
"But what if for a moment you imagine it were true?

"What if the ancient witness of those who visited the tomb of Jesus on that first Easter morning, who themselves didn't believe people could come back to life, was true? What if they really did see Jesus risen from the dead? What if someone has passed through death to new life? And what if, rather than being an April Fool's joke, this is the ultimate reality? "2.3 billion people in the world, including many scientists, have come to this conclusion. This has reframed how they approach death and what they think happens to us when we die.

"Each of us needs to have an answer to the question of what, if anything, is beyond death, if for no other reason than to make sense of life. Finding meaning can make facing the inevitable more bearable. "The Easter message tells us that it's not simply lights out. Easter is knowing that death is not the end of our story but rather the beginning of new life. It is the hope of knowing that our bodies will be resurrected too. "Our recent experience of the untimely death of some high-profile Tasmanians makes us aware of the fragility of our lives and reminds us of our own mortality.

"Hope in the midst of death – it's no April Fool's joke."I invite all Tasmanians to find hope in their local Christian church this Easter,"

Bishop Richar Condie



HOBART HAVEN

A chance to retreat from the fast pace of daily life and spend some time with Jesus

The night will include:
Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
Time for Silent Prayer
Hymns/Praise & Worship
Scripture Reflection
Benediction

On every Wednesday night
6-7pm at St Mary's Cathedral, Hobart

Starts in Holy Week on Wednesday 28 March with Archbishop Julian Porteous as the celebrant

The night is aimed at young adults who are also invited to join for a light supper afterwards

To put in your Agenda

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

13 May – 20 May 2018



Statue commemorating the Curaçao Slave Revolt of 1795 www.flickr.com/photos/23088289@N02/4383339615

Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power
(Exodus 15.6)



Christ is Risen!