

Resurrection: The Fire in Our Hearts

Just remember in the winter far beneath the bitter snows

Lies the seed

That with the sun's love

In the spring

Becomes the rose

This is the last stanza of the song "The Rose" sung by Bette Midler in the 1979 movie of the same name. The movie recounts the life of singer Janis Joplin who died tragically at the age of 27. In so many ways, this song captures the core of Joplin's life and what energized her.

Ron Rolheiser in "Holy Longing" cites Joplin along with Princess Diana and Mother Theresa as examples of persons who had the fire of great energy within them. Each of them handled this fire differently. In Joplin's case unfortunately, the fire was not controlled or channeled. But that is not to deny that Janis Joplin like the other two was filled with "fire".

For Rolheiser, this fire is what burns in our hearts as life-giving love. It is what drives our desires in life and forms what we would call our spirituality. As such it is part of God's gift to us all. It rests at the heart of every human being whether we recognize it or not, channel it or not.

For Christians, it is the resurrection of Jesus that ignites the fire in our hearts and drives our faith and life. The disciples who were filled with fear after the crucifixion, discovered this fire in the time that followed. It drove them to a new vision and energized them to head out with what they saw as Good News for life.

In the Sundays after Easter we see this again and again. In readings from John and from Luke the fearful, confused and dismayed women and men among Jesus's disciples see their lives turned around. At first filled with doubts that Thomas expresses this Sunday and marked by the disbelief that appears in all of them in the stories of John and Luke, they discover a new spirit among them. This fire of the spirit will lead them out into the world as new light in the darkness.

For them and for us the resurrection was not simply a single event in the life of Jesus. It is the core of our Christian faith. Our God is a life-giving God whose love drives us. The wonder or miracle of Jesus's resurrection was not a one-time event or only for Jesus. It is a miracle for us all and for our world. As wounded and broken as we and our world may be, we are also raised up. Resurrection happens over and over again in every expression of God's love in our world, in all humanity and all creation.

Among the clearest and most striking expressions of this light and fire for our world is in Matthew's Gospel in what we often refer to as the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). The opening of this sermon is the Beatitudes, the blessings (Matt.5:1-12). What is said in these blessings captures the ongoing risen life that is Good News to be shared, experienced and lived for all the peoples of the earth no matter what nation, culture, faith or non-faith.

Every single human being has this seed of new life planted within us. May the risen life that we hold in our hearts be the fire that brings life to our world in every place and time.