

On the first day of the week two men run to a stone quarry just outside the city of Jerusalem. A place where crucifixions took place as it was overlooked by the walls of the city and so was very public. The Romans wanted very visibly to show what would happen to opposition. The same site was also a place for burial and their friend and master had been buried in a newly hewn tomb after his crucifixion. They run together but one then speeds ahead; reaches the tomb and waits. His companion, always impetuous arrives and goes straight in. The first man follows. The grave clothes are there, neatly piled. We think back to the raising of Lazarus. He came out wearing his funeral shroud. He would require it again. Lazarus had been granted a temporary lease of life in this world. He would die again, condemned by the authorities. But here at this tomb we have something new, something different. A new creation is unfolding.

The man who arrived at the tomb first, sees and believes. In John's Gospel appearances are never the full picture. Faith is needed to give insight to sight. This is a man who is always identified as 'the beloved disciple'. Loves inspires faith; faith gives new sight.

It is interesting that his companion Peter, will be remembered as being the foundation rock of the Church through his resurrection -faith. An earlier formula of faith remembered by Luke is, "Yes, indeed it is true; the Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon". But here the faith of the first disciple is not mentioned; nor is his love. There is only silence.

Later in the 'Appendix' to the fourth Gospel, Peter will be interrogated about his love for the Lord. By a charcoal fire in a courtyard he had three times denied knowing his Master. Now by a charcoal fire on a lake-shore he will be compelled to declare his love three times. Peter has become another 'beloved disciple'. For the fourth evangelist love is the key. Love conquers all.

Who is the mysterious, un-named disciple whose characteristic is love? He appears only towards the end of the Gospel-story. Perhaps this is a remembered fact. Maybe he was not one of the original group of Jesus' followers. A late-comer to discipleship, he has connections in Jerusalem, knowing people in the palace of the High Priest, able to secure entry for Simon-Peter. Perhaps he was local to Jerusalem and not a man of Galilee.

At the end though he plays a prominent role: reclined next to Jesus in the place of honour at the Last Supper, so able to ask the Lord who was to betray him. He stands at the foot of the cross with Jesus' mother and is entrusted with her care. He gives true witness to the events of the crucifixion. He is the model disciple, representative of all who love the Lord. Possibly he is the inspiration behind the Gospel, leading a sort of

school of memory who preserved the words and deeds of the Lord.

The most important thing about him is his love.

Throughout these Holy Three Days we have reflected on the kingship of Christ crucified. Jesus is a king but unlike any king in this world. In this world kings take; Jesus gives unconditionally. Kings expect others to die for them. Jesus dies for us. Kings inspire fear; Jesus, proclaims love. And love, as the Beloved Disciple affirms today, love is the key.

Have a very happy Easter.