

Dear friends,

While Easter day is only a few days past – and the funny school holiday timings this year make the Easter break seem very short and rushed at the end, it might seem hard to remember that there was a holiday at all!

And what we might also not realise is that in actual fact the Easter season is only just beginning. We have actually been ‘holidaying’ through the season of Lent – and what our Easter Day celebrations of 21st April really mark is the beginning of the celebration themes of that Easter new hope – new beginnings and new life.

Some of us at this point might be thinking that we must be getting something wrong then - because for one reason or another there doesn't seem to be much to celebrate in our lives – that everything is either just as it ever was – or actually, things are quite tough at the moment, thank you very much...

But we can take heart – despite witnessing and being part of the joyful resurrection story, the first disciples also found themselves doubting, confused, and experiencing huge loss and uncertainty.

As you can imagine, it was an emotional roller coaster of a ride for them - from Good Friday when their leader was crucified to the time of his rising to new life on Easter day. And then, some forty days later – after many sightings – they encountered the bewildering time when Jesus ‘ascended to heaven’ and then ten days later the amazing ‘Pentecost experience’ when there seemed to be a mighty rush of wind and the appearance of ‘tongues of fire’ as they were filled with the Holy Spirit. (you can read more about the meaning of these two church celebrations further on in the magazine)

The point is, that although the disciples were experiencing a time of great ‘Easter joy’ – it wasn't plain sailing for them as is certainly isn't always plain sailing for us – even if we have faith and trust in the Easter story and its promises, life isn't always plain sailing.

Whether early disciples or people like us today, our spiritual lives – that inner working of all that we are – can sometimes be made up of joy and sadness – doubt and certainty – hope and despair. Having the sadness that comes in our own ‘Good Friday’ experiences of loss and grief doesn't mean that we won't at some other point in time experience the

'Easter Sunday joy' that the women and early disciples experienced. Like us, the disciples were human beings trying to do the best they could in the roller coaster of life.

Easter is a time of celebration – not because everything is now sorted and rosy – but because even when it isn't – and even when we have to get right in the thick of a sometimes challenging day-to-day routine way of living – we can turn to the possibility that there is a comforting and strengthening power that comes to us through the whole Easter experience – one that is available to anyone who calls upon it, has an open mind about it – and gives it a go.

During these next days of Eastertide, whether you doubt, believe or otherwise, I invite you to simply keep an open mind and open heart to the possibility of being able to experience the Easter of your own life – where promises and signs of new beginnings, new hope and new life mingle with the more challenging stuff of life, and show up in a way that will energise and encourage – and surprise...

Easter Blessings of hope and peace,
Jacqueline