

# Letter from the Priest at Crowland Abbey

## Easter

Dear Friends,

Easter, which falls on 21 April this year, is the most joyful day in the Christian year. Why? Because it represents the triumph of life over death, a triumph rooted in the love of God.

Yes, there is a lot in this world that can cause us to question this idea of a loving God. As we look out at our world we may well say, 'Where is God in all this mess, this mess that is the world, this mess that is my life?' This is a question that erupts from us, most especially when we are confronted with what seems to us to be utter injustice. Jesus, being human like us, must have felt this way since, according to Matthew and Mark, his last words were as follows: 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?' (Matthew 27: 46, Mark 15: 34).

According to Luke, however, Jesus' last words from the cross were, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit' (Luke 23: 48). According to John, Jesus' last words were simply, 'It is finished' (John 19: 30).

Which account is true? Did Jesus die doubting God's presence and goodness, as we could infer from Matthew and Mark? Or did he die at peace with God, as reflected by his words in Luke? The Church has always believed that both are true, that in his humanity Jesus questioned God, as we see in Matthew and Mark, but that his humanity ultimately relied on God, as we see in Luke. This interpretation fits with all we know about Jesus. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record that when Jesus was praying before his arrest and trial he said, concerning what he knew to be coming, 'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done' (Luke 22: 42, Matthew 26: 39, Mark 14: 36). If we look at Psalm 22, the opening words of which are the same as Jesus' last words as recorded by Matthew and Mark, we see that, although the psalm begins in anguish, it ends in praise and trust in God. Jesus would have known this psalm by heart. It is, therefore, highly likely that he had chosen to recite it because it was relevant to his terrible situation. In short, Jesus' trust in God's faithfulness and love was greater than his doubt.

I greatly value the fact that the Christian faith faces up not only to the suffering in the world, especially the undeserved suffering, but also to our human tendency to doubt or protest. Nowhere in the Bible is this more evident than in Jesus' crucifixion and his last words from the cross. Like us, Jesus was not happy about his suffering; but he knew that God would get him through it. He knew that ultimately God's love for him would see him through, as it did on Easter. What was true for Jesus is true for us. That is why Easter is the most joyful day in the year.

May God grant you the faith to know that God will get you through it and lead you to Easter joy.

Yours in Christ  
Charles