

Vicar's Pastoral Letter

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Subject : Leaving your burdens with Jesus.

Dear Friends,

I once knew a jogger who used to run every day with six bricks in a backpack in order to get himself fit. Personally I would only be "fit to drop" and even the thought of it is enough to make me go weak at the knees! But, he did it, convinced of the fact that once he'd broken through the pain barrier his heart, lungs, legs and every other part of his anatomy would be better for it. He said that after a while your body got used to it and that you were hardly aware you were carrying half a ton of bricks on your back! I was never convinced, however, looking at the sweat trickling down his exhausted face that displayed a pained expression.

Jesus carried a heavy load when he stumbled to Calvary and the pain must have been excruciating but the burden He carried was not His own but yours and mine. He carried it not in order to get fit but so that He might be nailed to it and die upon it so that you and I might be made fit for heaven. There is nothing heavier and nothing more painful than our sin and it was this that Jesus bore on His back.

Jesus was no jogger: He stumbled and fell along the dusty dirty road so that we might walk as free men and women into the life and liberty of heaven. He died for you on the Cross and descended into the deepest darkest pit of hell but three days later He was raised from the dead to new and everlasting life: the same life that we will enjoy if we trust and follow Him. This is what we celebrate at Easter that Jesus has walked the walk for us, borne the pain that was ours, died the death that should have been our sentence and was raised to the life that we neither earned nor deserved but which is our inheritance of faith through Him.

We recently had a service of celebration for marriage and I said at that service that no one can enter fully into a new life until and unless they have left their old one behind. It is OK for the bridegroom to look over his shoulder as his beautiful bride comes down the aisle but not fifty minutes later when they have both signed on the dotted line and committed themselves to each other. New lives are not built on the foundation of old lives or past experiences.

How many of us, then, are attempting to do the impossible? Jesus carried your heavy weight of sin to the Cross so that you and I could leave it there and not drag it with us into the new life beyond. The trouble with most of us is that we insist on taking it with us: we fail to make the most of Easter Day because we're too busy remembering Good Friday.

The jogger carried his bricks every day in order to become fit. He said that after a while he failed to notice the weight and yet his face told a different story. Many of us say that we've dealt with the past and are ready to move on but our behaviour, attitudes, feelings and words betray the fact that we haven't.

There is no need for any of us to continue to bear this burden no matter what the burden might be. Jesus said "take my yoke upon you for My burden is easy and My load is light. So, come to Me all you who are weary and carry heavy burdens and I will give you rest."

So, why not give it a go this Easter? Pack up your troubles and, no matter how heavy they are, leave them with Jesus. Then, and only then, will you know why you are celebrating.

May you have a truly blessed and happy Easter.

Peter

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PS: Easter this year is the earliest it's been for 95 years but it's never too early or too late to take Jesus up on His offer.