

What an Easter week, right? Like so many I was absolutely shocked to be awakened by the news of the Pope's passing on Monday. How? He had just appeared to the crowds on Easter Sunday; tired yes, but at 88 years old and after 5 weeks in a hospital, who wouldn't be. So I had sadness about his death.

Then of course all the conspiracy and talk about what his death means. I am already sick and tired of hearing of this prophecy of Malachi, that he would be the last Pope. People are going to Nostradamus' writing and saying how he predicted this too. Gobbly gook.

One of the most mis-understood books in the Bible, certainly in the New Testament, I think, is the Book of Revelation. People look to this as a prediction, a prophecy, of the end of the world! So many people look at the minute details trying to discern the exact moment; interpreting Pope's deaths, or other world events as signs of the end of the world!

And they could not be further from the truth. It is John of Patmos' vision of how faith in God gives us strength. It is about how God's love, shown and lived in Jesus, gives us hope and will remain. It is of how Jesus' death and resurrection have defeated death already.

There is no shortage of pain and suffering in this world. People continue to be killed by war and violence; Ukraine, Gaza, South Sudan. People suffer here in our own country with poverty, hunger, shootings, being made to feel unwelcome, treated with no dignity. In our own community here, people struggle with serious illnesses, with relationships having problems, broken hearts. People mourn those who have died; their parents, their children; siblings, friends.

We can just want to give up. How many times did Pope Francis call out for the need of compassion, kindness, mercy?

A group of people were afraid and sad. They tried to hide. Hide from authorities whom they assumed were after them. Hide from others for the shame of abandoning their friend as he was executed. Scared too that all that they thought they believed had been for nothing. Hide from their perceived failure, and the perceived failure of Jesus.

The disciples struggled.

There and then comes the friend they abandoned; Jesus. He comes very much alive and well; and somehow different. Not at the end of time, but in their moment of need.

He comes not with anger and violence; not with accusations and guilt. He did not come as a failure.

He comes with mercy, he comes in and with Divine Love. He comes victorious over hate, over envy and pride, over the desire for power, over death.

He comes in love and overcomes their fears, their despair.

Jesus' resurrection reveals God's judgement on the disciples and on humanity; a judgment of love. God forgives us. God believes in our capacity for goodness. God desires us to be lifted up and to move forward.

We who are baptized, the waters of judgement, the waters of love, the water of God's forgiveness, of goodness have been and will be poured into our very being. The very breath of God, the Spirit of God comes into us.

Poured into us, always, so that we too can love, forgive, lift others up.

God's love is never just our own individual sake; it is for the world. God created us to be a part of the creation of this world and so we are meant to take this love, this Spirit, this breath, and go into this world and live it out.

We share mercy with others, not condemnation.

We share love with others, not rejection and exclusion.

We give compassion and kindness, and transform the broken hearted, the lonely, the isolated.

We pronounce by our very lives the victory of God over death.

The end of revelation is that. Jesus already has won, he has given himself for the world.

Live in that victory. Share that victory by loving and being alive.