

*Why do you look for
the Living among the
dead?" (Luke 24:5b)*



The mystery of Easter defangs the power of death in the destruction and glorification of the body of Jesus. The Camaldolese Benedictine Ivan Nicoletto writes, "In the tombs of the world, an upsetting question arises that violates the established boundaries of this world: *"Why do you look for the Living among the dead?"* (Cf. Luke 24:5).

For Ivan Nicoletto the Spirit within us tells that this question is not going to stop. Why? Because in the face of death we are constantly challenged, reminded, and confronted with the mystery of life, that invites us to look beyond death and the ravages it brings, and urges us to respond. He writes, "In our time we are experiencing a very great death and a very great birth." How do we live out this destabilizing question, moving between cross and resurrection.

Nicoletto tackles the questions that encompass the Cross and the Resurrection to bring about the very great birth: "Every time we break the tomb of the world as it is, with its injustice, you arise, Jesus. When we welcome women to crack our hierarchical and patriarchal culture, you arise, God. When we ban guns that are expansions and explosions of our violent hearts, you arise, Christ.... When we are able to embrace and to bend over the shadow, the repressed, the denied in our bodies, in our relationship with others, you arise, Jesus. When we honor creation without greed and exploitation, growing in respect, awe and gratitude for our planet earth, you arise, God."

In today's culture of death, Christ arises:

- Where there is bullying in schools and in the workplace, a number rise to the occasion in defense of the weak.
- Where there are abortion clinics promoted by groups that uphold the rights of women over their body at the detriment of the child in the womb that has to be gotten rid of, pro-life groups move in to stand up for the rights of the unborn.
- With the pollution of rivers and lakes, of oceans and seas, where there are initiatives in waste management and environmental protection.
- Where there is the promotion of electric vehicles to cut down on transportation emissions, for a cleaner atmosphere and the air we breathe.
- Where more nuclear power reactors are being closed globally due to the radioactive risks they pose.
- Where peoples of low lying island nations in the Pacific are bringing their plight of the rising sea water to the attention of the world.

The question: In the face of greed, selfish interest, the desire for power rooted in the hearts of people, is there hope for the great birth? Yes, when peoples and nations wake up to the reality of the culture of death, rise to the challenge of a great birth, and learn from the lessons of the past. Pope Francis has issued the encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* to bring to the consciousness of the world the destruction of the environment and the responsibility to preserve the earth, our common home. We have become a global village and the earth is our only home; there is no other planet as the beautiful earth in the solar system nor in our galaxy (if there is, nobody knows).

We rely on these words of the Lord (Isaiah: 43:19): "See, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? In the wilderness I make a way, in the wasteland, rivers." Apropos is this sonnet, *God's Grandeur* of G. M. Hopkins, SJ. (1844-1889)

*The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell:
the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.
And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs--
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah!
bright wings.*

Let us be strengthened by the words of Jesus to Martha at the death of Lazarus (John 11:25), "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die."

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Source: Nicoletto, Ivan. *Journey of Faith, Journey of the Universe: The Lectionary and the New Cosmology*. (MN: Liturgical Press, 2015)