**Ode to Joy**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X_hIptF5aCA>

Our help is in the name of the Lord

All  **who made heaven and earth.**

**Most merciful God,**

**we confess to you,**

**before the whole company of heaven and one another,**

**that we have sinned in thought, word and deed**

**and in what we have failed to do.**

**Forgive us our sins,**

**heal us by your Spirit**

**and raise us to new life in Christ. Amen.**

O God, make speed to save us.

*All*  **O Lord, make haste to help us.**

*All*  **Glory to the Father and to the Son**

**and to the Holy Spirit;**

**as it was in the beginning is now**

**and shall be for ever. Amen.**

**Alleluia.**

*Psalm 91 vv1-7*

1    Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High  ♦

and abides under the shadow of the Almighty,

2    Shall say to the Lord, ‘My refuge and my stronghold,  ♦

my God, in whom I put my trust.’

3    For he shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler  ♦

and from the deadly pestilence.

4    He shall cover you with his wings

    and you shall be safe under his feathers;  ♦

his faithfulness shall be your shield and buckler.

5    You shall not be afraid of any terror by night,  ♦

nor of the arrow that flies by day;

6    Of the pestilence that stalks in darkness,  ♦

nor of the sickness that destroys at noonday.#

7    Though a thousand fall at your side

    and ten thousand at your right hand,  ♦

yet it shall not come near you.

**Glory to the Father and to the Son**

**and to the Holy Spirit;**

**as it was in the beginning is now**

**and shall be for ever. Amen.**

**Reading**

The Gospel according to St John, chapter 20:

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb;and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet.They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” Saying this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rab-bo′ni!” (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, “Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” Mary Magdalene went and said to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Let us pray together:

**Save us, O Lord, while waking,**

**and guard us while sleeping,**

**that awake we may watch with Christ**

**and asleep may rest in peace.**

*Nunc Dimittis:*

 Now, Lord, you let your servant go in peace:  ♦

your word has been fulfilled.

2    My own eyes have seen the salvation  ♦

which you have prepared in the sight of every people;

3    A light to reveal you to the nations  ♦

and the glory of your people Israel.

*Luke 2.29-32*

*All*  **Glory to the Father and to the Son**

**and to the Holy Spirit;**

**as it was in the beginning is now**

**and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Reflection

What does the resurrection of Jesus mean to me in my everyday life? It tells me that the world I live in ultimately is a safe and hospitable place, a place made by Love for Love, love that is stronger than death. The law may tell me that I’m not a woman. The law by which Jesus was judged denied his identity too, in fact told him that it was a blasphemy, an abhorrence and he was sentenced to an agonising and shameful death. It was women who stood by him at the end and a woman was the first witness to the Resurrection. I feel greatly honoured to be counted amongst women and if the world now feels a little less safe than it did for me and other trans people I know that if I fall or fail or am unjustly condemned the everlasting arms are there to catch and hold me and tell me I am loved.

Where did this ruling (Supreme Court) come from? A few friends have suggested we have brought this on ourselves by being too militant, too shrill and uncompromising in our demands. That we have been asking for too much too soon. I know where they are coming from on this but to me that tastes too much of the victim being blamed for their own victimisation. Whatever the faults of the trans community we are surely far more sinned against than sinning. The reality is that through no fault of our own this has been coming for some time. Dr Nicolete Burbach, a Catholic trans woman who works at the London Jesuit Centre, wrote this:

“Writing as a trans person, I am conscious of the way[our story](https://juliaserano.substack.com/p/revisiting-the-transgender-tipping) follows the Gospel particularly closely in this: we had our own triumphal entry in the first years of the 2010s, slowly growing in acceptance to the point that trans life became possible in a way it had never been before. And then everything fell apart.

Here in the UK, the media[turned against us](https://edition.cnn.com/2021/10/09/uk/uk-trans-rights-gender-critical-media-intl-gbr-cmd/index.html), institutions were[captured](https://transsafety.network/posts/draft-ehrc-code-of-practice-concerning-shift-priorities/) by those who see us as enemies, and[public opinion](https://yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/51545-where-does-the-british-public-stand-on-transgender-rights-in-202425) degenerated to a position of hostility. Ideological capitulation to the[far right](https://greens.scot/news/labour-warned-against-pandering-to-far-right) and[allied groups](https://www.thepinknews.com/2024/05/29/labour-wes-streeting-gender-critical-groups/) has made[transphobia](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/feb/10/labour-shelves-plans-easier-people-legally-change-gender) the[policy](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cly2z0gx3p5o) of all our[leading parties](https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/could-reform-uks-surge-in-the-polls-translate-into-power/), while the courts have allowed themselves to become a stage for punitive[misgendering and targeting for harassment](https://bylines.scot/society/whose-feelings-count-how-a-workplace-tribunal-turned-into-a-trans-show-trial/). In the US…… transphobia was a[cornerstone](https://www.msnbc.com/opinion/msnbc-opinion/trumps-anti-trans-ads-are-just-election-rhetoric-rcna178755) of Donald Trump’s presidential campaign, and his victory was quickly followed by a slew of cruel[transphobic](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/defending-women-from-gender-ideology-extremism-and-restoring-biological-truth-to-the-federal-government/)[executive](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/keeping-men-out-of-womens-sports/)[orders](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/protecting-children-from-chemical-and-surgical-mutilation/).”

So the Supreme Court ruling is the culmination of a growing tide of hostility to trans people – especially of course to trans women – over a number of years. All trans people have found ourselves conscripted to the front line of the “culture wars” when we wanted, most of us, just to be left in peace to get on with our lives, harmlessly and inoffensively. Some trans people will feel afraid now to come out of the closet while others may feel they have to retreat back into it. Whether we are in or out, we should not have to live in a state of fear and anxiety. Once we have tasted the joy of being free to live openly as who we are, there is surely no going back.

Nicolete wrote her blog from which I’ve quoted to mark the desolation of Palm Sunday when all hope seemed to be lost, when the crucified Jesus was deserted, mocked as a failure, exposed as an impostor, his identity ridiculed. It felt like the end. Of course it was not the end. As has been said, in the end all shall be well. If all is not well, it’s not the end.

We have now entered what I always feel is the most blessed and delightful time of the year – the period between the resurrection and the ascension, when the risen Christ was in some sense physically present in the world and we may feel, still, an especial sense of that presence in us and amongst us. In the coming weeks those of us who are church-goers (or Bible readers!) will be pondering the mysterious appearances of the Risen Christ – from the first appearance where Mary Magdalene mistook him for a gardener; to the appearance in the locked room to the disciples and Thomas who was invited to place his hands in the wounds of the crucifixion; to the appearance to the disciples on the road to Emmaus; and to the barbecue on the beach. There is a consistent theme of the resurrected Jesus not being initially recognised. The Risen Christ both is and is not the same as the crucified Jesus. Those of who have had the privilege of being able to come out and fully transition might identify with this. So maybe that is another way in which as Nicolete says the trajectory of trans lives may follow that of the Gospel.

The Gospel – the life, death and resurrection of Jesus – of course is the archetype of all lives, the path all life must follow. It is just perhaps more clearly visible in the life of trans people, many of whom have followed the path of descent, suffering and loss merely in order to live as themselves or indeed have suffered greatly to keep their identity hidden as Jesus was at some pains to do except to close friends until the ultimate “coming out” event of the resurrection. So take heart dear trans friends and allies. If God is on our side, as I’m sure we all believe, the world, however transphobic and hostile it appears right now, may scorn, deride and humiliate us but cannot defeat us or force us to deny who we are. Let me leave you with some words of hope from a far more eloquent preacher than me, that great modern-day prophet Fr Richard Rohr:

“Anything less than the death of the false self is useless religion. The manufactured false self must die for the true self to live, or as Jesus himself puts it, “Unless I go, the Spirit cannot come” (John 16:7). Theologically speaking, Jesus (a good individual person) had to die for the Christ (the universal presence) to arise. This is the universal pattern of transformation.

The miracle of it all—if we are to speak of miracles—is that God has found the most ingenious way to transform the human soul. God uses the very thing that would normally destroy us—the tragic, the sorrowful, the painful, the unjust deaths that lead us all to the bottom of our lives—to transform us. There it is, in one sentence. Are we prepared to trust that?

Jesus’ death and resurrection is a statement of how reality works all the time and everywhere. He teaches us that there’s a different way to live with our pain, our sadness, and our suffering. We can say, “Woe is me,” and feel sorry for ourselves, or we can say, “God is even in this.”

None of us crosses over this gap from death to new life by our own effort, our own merit, our own purity, or our own perfection. Each of us—from pope to president, from princess to peasant—is carried across by unearned grace. Worthiness is never the ticket, only deep desire. With that desire the tomb is always, finally empty, as Mary Magdalene discovered on Easter morning. Death cannot win. We’re finally indestructible when we recognize that the thing which could destroy us is the very thing that could enlighten us.

Friends, the Easter feast is a reminder to all of us to open our eyes and our ears and to witness what is happening all around us, all the time, everywhere. God’s one and only job description is to turn death into life. That’s what God does with every new springtime, every new life, every new season, every new anything. God is the one who always turns death into life, and no one who trusts in this God will ever be put to shame (Psalm 25:3).”

Amen.

**Prayers**

In our prayers, let us remember all of our trans siblings who may now be feeling especially distressed, anxious and fearful, that they may have their courage and confidence renewed by their faith in the Risen Christ. We remember also those who lack faith and can find no meaning or hope in their suffering and all who feel unloved, that you will help them to discover that the supreme expression of love is shown by Jesus in agony upon the cross.

Lord in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

We pray for all church leaders and especially those who must now choose both a new Pope and new Archbishop of Canterbury. May the Holy Spirit guide them to the choice of those who can lead the Catholic and Anglican churches to a path where all are welcomed and none excluded so that the churches can give prophetic, Christ-like leadership to a world sorely in need of it

Lord in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

We pray too for our government and politicians that they may be guided not solely by the politically expedient or advantageous but by a moral compass biased to the poor and disadvantaged and those who are “othered” and marginalised.

Lord in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

We pray for all who live in countries devastated by war or suffering tyranny and oppression, that they too might know the love of the Risen Christ.

Lord in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

We bring to you in prayer the needs of all who are sick or in distress in mind, body or spirit, especially those known to us.

Lord in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

Amen

*The Collect*

Visit this place, O Lord, we pray,

and drive far from it the snares of the enemy;

may your holy angels dwell with us and guard us in peace,

and may your blessing be always upon us;

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All*  **Amen.**

**The Conclusion**

In peace we will lie down and sleep;

*All*  **for you alone, Lord, make us dwell in safety.**

Abide with us, Lord Jesus,

*All*  **for the night is at hand and the day is now past.**

As the night watch looks for the morning,

*All*  **so do we look for you, O Christ.**

The Lord bless us and watch over us;

the Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious to us;

the Lord look kindly on us and give us peace.

*All*  **Amen.**

**I shall raise you up**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CRMbh8ViUI>