

Reflection from Fr. Colm on the Second Sunday of Easter

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Good morning everybody this Second Sunday of Easter, Divine Mercy Sunday. Inspirational stories Easter throw up obviously in the scriptures today, all of them fantastic things happening but I'm thinking about more immediate situations and people especially some of our Sri Lankan parishioners as they recounted to me arriving in Colombo airport the capital of Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday 2019 and hearing the bombs, succession of bombs that went off when the city was devastated by a terrorist attack or attacks.

One family caught in the blast was the family of Ben and Anita Nicholson and they were caught not in any of the three churches at which over two hundred people died but they were caught in a blast with their two children Alex and Annabel in the hotel in which they were staying just as they were about to depart after a lovely week's stay there. They were preparing to leave and as they breakfasted the bomb went off with devastating effects in their hotel.

Ben the father of the family survived, and he survived by deciding at the last minute he'd like to try some pancakes. And so, he left the table at which his wife and daughter were seated, their son had gone off to another part of the restaurant and at that point in time the explosion went off. The only thing that stopped Ben being killed was a pillar which he was standing behind as he stood before the counter and the chef baked his pancakes. Extraordinary coincidences. Why do I mention this tragic story at this time? Is this not more of a Good Friday story? Well, no it isn't because for me it's a hugely inspirational story. It's a resurrection story and I'll tell you why.

Resurrection is about finding hope in times of the deepest darkness it's that ability to allow anger and bitterness not to get the better of us isn't it? Ben Nicholson shows every quality that for me is life being chosen instead of death. He knew his wife and daughter were dead, but he couldn't find his son who had drifted as I say to that other part of the restaurant when the bomb went off. He hoped that he was outside and away from the blast but at 4pm sadly he went to the mortuary or was called to the mortuary to identify his son's Alex's body. Now here's the thing people say they don't know how they'd cope Ben was asked how he

coped and he added "But I would say, but I would've said all that as well if you'd asked me the day before but when you're facing up to it I suppose you've got to find a way of dealing with it." And he adds "I've had 22 amazing years with Anita, people spend their entire life trying to get what we had. You have to be happy about that, to have had that time. But equally there are moments you just look at it and think we had everything, and we lost it all." And he adds, yes, he does, he thinks about them all the time. "And there are prompts everywhere there's nothing to stop you thinking about them" and then adds beautifully "Not that I would want to."

Ben now organises a charity in their name he has nothing but praise for the Sri Lankan medics, he has returned to the scene of the tragedy because as he said it was the right thing to do. And what about the bombers? He said *"I don't feel any anger I just don't think about them. I give them nothing."* Any regrets about taking his family on that holiday? *"You can't regret going because it's part of our lives and what we were. We were just ridiculously unlucky."*

Extraordinary.

The disciples are locked with fear in today's Gospel, they're locked in. It's Jesus who unlocks them. But this is a fear that can only be overcome from within and not from the outside this is the clear indication of this wonderful story. It's the story for you and me. How often do we hear the word fear these corona days? We too are locked in physically within our homes, wherever we might be but it's what is within, deep within each one of us that counts. It's amazing to see how through our Christian reach out that that same fear is eased. We live in a time where politics can be more about saying the right thing - sounds acceptable and sellable - but can often have no substance.

However, what is the substance of the Christian calling? What is the substance of what that witness of Ben Nicholson shows me? Well, in the Acts of the Apostles today we hear that many signs and miracles were worked through the apostles which made a deep impression on everyone. Made a deep impression on everyone. I see this happening all the time. In our Parish, in society at large. The clapping, the medics, the incredible health workers but the many, many acts of decency and kindness that we see around us. Divine Mercy indeed is everywhere to be seen. God bless you today on this Second Sunday of Easter.