

The peace of Christ is given to us so that we may face his departure with equanimity. This is one of the most extraordinary features of the resurrection stories. Mary Magdalen runs through the whole gamut of emotion in three sentences, as through her tears she recognises the living Christ on Easter morning; yet she only has to be told

Do not cling to me,

and she is instantly ready to leave him and go to find the disciples. Gone is that dumbfounded tendency to *build three tents here, and to stay here for ever*; the seers of the Risen Lord are ready to be put to work.

This makes us understand that the real enemy of peace is the destructive power of *time*. We have time to live, and time can seem very precious to us when we are hard-pressed and anxious, struggling to change places or get work done or meet deadlines; most precious, perhaps, when we are running out of it altogether, and have to face death which is its agent. Yet the very fact of time is what makes us differ most radically from God, who lives absolutely outside this murdering reality; so that we say of him that

in him there is no alteration, no shadow of a change;

he does not grow old or become exhausted, but possesses all things and all possibilities in perfect peace and equilibrium. The first gift of Jesus risen from the dead is that we should share his peace, share his dominion over all change and apparent loss. The life in which Jesus of Nazareth is invested at the resurrection is the eternal fulness that is liberated from all enslavement to time and space. Limitlessly, he enjoys a freedom that is perfect peace. This is why he calls it

a peace the world cannot give.

Jesus repeats a phrase we have heard before, a phrase he used when speaking of his betrayal:

*I have told you this now, before it happens,
so that when it does happen you may believe.*

We should take from this the wisdom that, when change and decay strike at us, carrying away our strength and quality, our possessions and our power, our friendships and our friends, we may not doubt or lose our trust in the one who never changes. Then our balanced and measured courage before the thrills and spills of a passing life may stand as a sign to others

that we love the Father, and are doing exactly what the Father has commanded.