The Heart of Easter

For me, the very heart of Easter is a story of liberation. Easter emerges from God's desire to set God's people free. The story of that liberating love begins with the Exodus of God's people from a place of enslavement that is from the land of Egypt and all it represents. Joseph, Pharoah's henchman, devises a plan to ensure both the preservation of his kinspeople, from starvation, and the enslaving, through economic means, of the poorer Egyptians. At one point, the Egyptians cry out: ***"...There is nothing left in the sight of my Lord but our bodies and our lands. Shall we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land in exchange for food. We with our land will become slaves to Pharoah..."*** [Gen. 47: 18-19]

When desperate people sell one child to feed the others, we see the devastation that economic enslavement can still do in our world today. Later, when the Israelites became numerous and prospered in Egypt, the Egyptians treated them harshly. Yet God was not deaf and blind to the harsh realities. God heard and God saw: ***"Then the Lord said, 'I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters."*** [Exod.3: 7]

We worship the God who is as concerned with our physical wellbeing as our spiritual wellbeing. For God seeks our liberation in every aspect of our lives. And that is true for all of us, for each one of us. Therefore, God liberated the people of Israel out of slavery, out of bondage, out of despair.

God, in the Exodus story, revealed what is at the heart of God. It is release from all that seeks to hold us enslaved - racism, sexism, homophobia, nationalism, pride, love of self. Liberation is at the centre of Easter.

Under Moses, God leads the people of Israel out of bondage into freedom. They travel with all that they possess into an unknown future.

We have witnessed a similar exodus of people in Ukraine. In Exodus 12, we read that it was not just Israelites who left the land of captivity: ***"The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children. A mixed crowd also went up with them..."*** [Exod 12: 37-38a] John Dobson in SPCK's A Guide to Exodus surmises that this mixed bunch might have *included some Egyptians who had married Israelites* as well as *other people who had migrated from Palestine to Egypt and had become slaves***.** As people leave the advancing Russian forces in Ukraine, are we mindful that not all of them can be classified as Ukrainians? Is the heart of God therefore any less closed to them in their desperation and their anxiety? Yet our government seems oblivious that Ukraine was not only home to Ukrainians but also to foreign students, asylum seekers and foreign workers. If liberation is only for a few, what value does it have? If God's love is only for the people who think and act like me, does that love have currency in our broken world? In the second epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul writes: ***"...in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself; not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us."*** [2 Cor. 5: 19]

  For me, at the heart of Easter lies God's reconciling grace. It is God's open declaration that God is on our side against the forces of sin in all their forms. And because of that, God's people must be ready to stand against all the powers and the all the principalities that would seek to usurp the love of God for the whole of humanity. But we are not alone. The Holy Spirit strengthens us. Christ will be forever by our side. God will never leave us or forsake us. May we each seek to do the Will of God in our lives and in this world.

AMEN