

Dear all

For anyone who missed the livestream this morning, the link is:

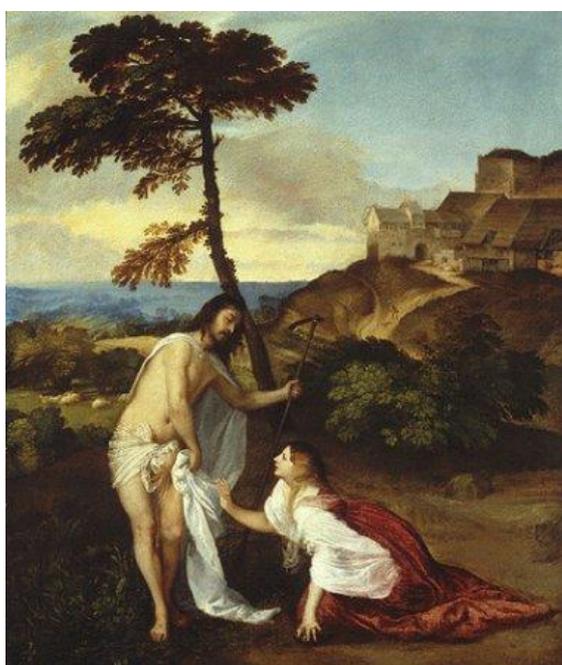
<https://www.facebook.com/938962326130409/videos/313292136317823/>

Containing 2 Friday Knights' Easter Gardens that came in after my previous posting:



I'd also like to share Richard Coles' Facebook post this morning:

A table laid for one today as I celebrated Holy Communion alone, my church closed, my congregation locked down, as we mark the greatest festival in the Church's year, Easter, in the strangest way I have ever experienced.



To a congregation of two dachshunds I read the Gospel, the story of Mary Magdalene going to Jesus' tomb to anoint his body, but meeting there a man she mistook for a gardener. She asks him where they have laid her Lord, and only when he says her name - "Mary" - does she recognise him. It is Jesus, not dead, but alive, not some cunning caper, but risen from the grave in which they put him, lifeless, broken, and torn, only the day before. So what is front of her is literally unfathomable, she doesn't know what to do, and she reaches out to him.

Maybe you have seen the famous painting of this episode by Titian in the National Gallery, known by the phrase in the Latin Bible *Noli Me Tangere*, 'do not touch me,' the words Jesus says to her as she reaches out? In fact in the painting he seems almost to recoil from her. He is God Incarnate, and stands apart now, in the power of the resurrection, from

those still captive to sin, our inheritance as sons of Adam and daughters of Eve.

The painting was one of the few that was not packed up and sent for storage in a disused mine during the Second World War to protect it from Nazi bombs. The National Gallery put it on display and thousands of Londoners went to see it, wanting to connect, I guess, not only to our heritage, reassuringly preserved by our national institutions, but to the story it reveals, of unquenchable life and unconquerable love when all seems lost.

It is also a testament to the consequences of poor translation. 'Do not touch me', St Jerome's 4th century Latin translation of the Greek original is misleading. The Greek text is actually Μή μου ἅπτου - the verb, haptou, has continuous force, so rather than do not touch me, as Jerome has it, it means do not cling to me. That's quite different, and I interpret it not to mean that Jesus is now literally untouchable by mortals, our fingers so corruptible not even hospital grade sanitiser can make them clean, but that we must let him go where he needs to go, no longer just for us, but for all.

A table set for one, but a feast for all. We must not cling to Christ, keeping him where we want him to be, to serve our desires. He must, like the miraculous meal of loaves and fishes, feed the hungry and thirsty wherever they are, especially those furthest away - alone in hospital, untreatable and uncomforted by family; those on the front line, risking their lives with insufficient protection and overwhelming demand; and those most wretched who lie beyond even our most generous sympathy and concern.

So this morning when I ate his bread and drank his wine, in an unknown village, in a Cinderella county, in the unfashionable East Midlands of England, it was with, and for, them - and for the whole world.

I wish you a joyful Easter, in these terrible times, hope when all is lost, food for the hungry, healing for the sick, comfort for the grieving, and light for those in darkness.

And finally, not religious, but possibly one of the funniest things I have seen on the internet, and a classic use of lockdown time!

<https://www.facebook.com/kudosports/videos/234474494433963/>

Stay safe

Blessings and love

Mark