

Osterzweifel: Living with Easter doubt

Bischof Harald Rückert's message for Easter 2022

We are currently living through stressful times. The pandemic is still there and now war on top of that. Millions of people seeking protection and help are fleeing horror and terror in their homelands. They no longer come only from Africa and Asia, but now also from Europe. The news about the climate catastrophe has been sidelined by this—but this crisis also remains relentlessly actual.

We feel inescapably how vulnerable our lives are. In the context of the pandemic, someone described this as an “untimely-premature encounter with death.” To this insecurity of life is now added the inhumane war of aggression on Ukraine. In the face of a despot who is out of control and cannot be stopped, the fundamental convictions of the peaceful coexistence of peoples have been massively shaken. A feeling of powerlessness is spreading.

I cannot escape all this. It occupies me. My faith and my hope are challenged. Many things that have been taken for granted so far seem questionable. Horror and suffering take over my thoughts and “do something to me”. They overshadow faith and eat away at certainty. Evil and death triumph—as they did on Good Friday.

It is difficult to talk about resurrection this year. But just now it is necessary! Because evil and death will not win the triumph! Easter turns everything upside down—no: everything back to its feet. Jesus went through torture and fear, through injustice and death. On Easter morning he disgraced death. Death and fear have worked themselves to death on him. The darkness of abandonment to God and the fearful cry, “Why have you forsaken me?” flow into

glory with God. Injustice is stripped of its rights. Hate has hated out. The love of God has overcome hatred.

I want to open myself wide to this Easter message. It engages me, challenges my faith and hope. It sows the “Osterzweifel”—the “Easter doubt.” This is the unshakable doubt about the massive and seemingly insurmountable reality of malice and death, horror and suffering. As terrible and scary as this reality that surrounds us seems, it will not triumph! That is why I find this so ambiguous word “Easter doubt” so “speaking”. It is true that the terrible reality almost makes me doubt Easter. But the Easter message invites me to doubt precisely this powerful and destructive reality. My questions and insecurities, my powerlessness and my shaken hope are outshined. With Easter, courage sprouts in me. With Easter, confidence grows in me.

Easter 2022—which doubt unfolds its effect? The doubt of Easter fuelled by the cruel reality, which continues the work of the final appearing Good Friday hopelessness. Or may the doubt about the evil reality nourished by Easter unfold its effect? May the Easter hope put my life on its feet?

Despite all the drama of our time: the victory of life and the triumph of love are evident since Easter—also this year!

I wish you blessed Easter days.

Bischof Harald Rückert

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