



St John's Cathedral 聖公會聖約翰座堂

Anglican Diocese of Hong Kong Island
Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui

Message of Hope: Our belief in resurrection

6th August 2020

The Revd Will Newman

I'm Will Newman, one of the clergy at St John's Cathedral.

Once again we are going through difficult times in Hong Kong. In recent weeks the coronavirus has spread much faster than before, infecting many hundreds more people. We hope that the tighter measures introduced by the government will slow and halt the spread of the virus again, but in the meantime many people are suffering financially, and our lives are more restricted, even more fearful. Political developments add to the sense that Hong Kong is going through difficult times.

Over the years I have led three pilgrimages from the cathedral, and each one has told a story of resurrection, encouraging hope in situations far worse than we experience now.

The first was to the world-famous Passion Play in Oberammergau, a tiny village in Germany. Four hundred years ago the plague was spreading in that area, and the villagers prayed to God to deliver them from death. When their prayers were answered, they started a tradition of performing a passion play, a drama telling the story of the last week of Jesus' life up to the crucifixion and resurrection. For 400 years the villagers have continued the tradition every ten years. It's a beautiful reminder of hope in dark times.

The second pilgrimage or study tour was to visit historical Christian sites in China, from the first Christian missionary in the year 635 up to the present day. One memory that has stayed with me was at a church in Shanghai where the Red Guards came in 1966, breaking and destroying, and the churches were closed during the Cultural Revolution when Christian worship was banned. But then came the day in 1979 when that church was reopened and I was told that the queue to get in stretched right round the block. It was another powerful story of resurrection.

And then last year I took a pilgrimage to Nagasaki, to the sites where Japanese and foreign Christians were martyred for their faith in terrible persecutions in the early 17th century. For 250 years while Japan was closed to the outside world and Christianity was banned on pain of severe punishment or death, brave villagers kept their faith in secret as Hidden Christians, until the law was finally relaxed. Today there are flourishing Catholic churches in those villages, telling yet another story of resurrection.

Hong Kong is not experiencing anything like all of the trials I've mentioned. If Christians in Germany, China and Japan could keep their faith and hope alive through terrible times, we too should not give in to doubt or despair. We believe in resurrection, rising again through dark and difficult times. Let's show that belief and that hope in our daily lives.

Peace be with you.