

An Easter letter

I'd never met Marguerita. Her letter to me arrived out of the blue, a sunburst of inspiration in an otherwise mundane day. A Madonna reader undergoing her third bout of chemotherapy for breast cancer (as she explained in her introduction), Marguerita had felt moved to pen a simple anecdote from her life experience. 'The present moment has always been dear to my heart,' she wrote. 'Especially since the deaths of my two sons 11 years ago. They were 23 and 26 years of age.'

With introductory words like that I knew I was already being drawn into her story. Even before the accompanying reflection could be read, the gospel was unfolding like a parable. Here was someone besieged by tragedy—a mother who had lost two sons within six weeks of each other, a woman now battling a serious illness—saying 'You know, I felt God's grace today and...'

I can only stand in grateful awe of such faith. Undoubtedly a woman like Marguerita is a living testimony to Jesus, crucified and risen. Her story reminds me that the power of the gospel lies not just in what is said, but who is saying it. The storyteller is integral to the story.

But then, read Marguerita's letter for yourself:

"At different stages of their lives my grandchildren accompany me on my visits to the local cemetery to place flowers on the graves of my

sons and baby grandson. Like all children they love to explore, straighten vases and collect blown away flowers. They have no fear, accepting with trust that this is a place where people are laid to rest.

"They have witnessed a young family's loss of their mother and know Mrs Mahoney is not there to put her children on the school bus, cut their lunches, cook their dinner or wipe away their tears. She is in the earth. Small children do not always understand the reality of death, expecting whoever has died to return as Jesus did for his disciples.

"As we drive out of the cemetery we pass a neat brick wall surrounded by native bushes. Within the wall lie the ashes of loved ones behind plaques commemorating their names and lives. My four year old granddaughter remarks 'Oh, they have their letter boxes too.'

"Anna, tell me more about the letter boxes at the cemetery,' says her grandfather when we arrive home. 'Oh that is for when they are born again - they will need their mail,' she replies.

"The resurrection is simple to Anna. Unafraid, accepting and believing without fully understanding, her little heart and mind tell her that we will all live forever. She knows that her daddy's brothers, her baby cousin and her friend's mummy are peacefully being made new again as they share in God's kingdom.

"And she knows that we all need our mail."

During Lent and Easter, let's be attentive to the stories of people of faith. They are the continuing scripture story, the word of God alive in our midst. •

