

Rev. Kim K. Crawford Harvie  
 Arlington Street Church  
 20 April, 2014

### **All Will Come Again Into Its Strength**

The earth is doing her part. The rest of Easter is up to us.

“All will come again into its strength,” writes Austrian poet Rainer Rilke.

All will come again into its strength:  
 the fields undivided, the waters undammed,  
 the trees towering and the walls built low.  
 And in the valleys, people as strong  
 and varied as the land.

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At the end of every weekday, Julio Diaz, a thirty-one year old social worker, makes an hour-long subway commute home to the Bronx, and hops off one stop short to eat at his favorite diner.

Six years ago on a February night, he walked across a nearly empty train platform and headed for the stairs. A young teenager stepped out of nowhere and pulled a knife. Just like that, Julio Diaz was being mugged.

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“He wants my money,” he says, “so I just [give] him my wallet and [tell] him, ‘Here you go.’”

“He starts to leave, and as he’s walking away, I’m like, ‘Hey, wait a minute. You forgot something. If you’re going to be robbing people for the rest of the night, you might as well take my coat to keep you warm.’”

“So, you know, he’s looking at me like, ‘What’s going on here?... And he [asks] me, ... ‘Why are you doing this?’ And I’m like, ‘Well, I don’t know, man. If you’re willing to risk your freedom for a few dollars, then I guess you must really need the money. I mean, all I wanted to do was go get dinner.... If you ... want to join me, hey, you’re more than welcome.’ ... I’m

like, ‘Look, you can follow me if you want.’ You know, I just [feel] like maybe he really needs help.”

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Julio Diaz continues, “So ... we go into the diner where I normally eat. We sit down in a booth and the manager comes by, ... the waiters comes by, ... the dishwashers come by, ... to say hi, you know. So the kid is like, ‘Man, you know everybody here. Do you own this place?’ I’m like, ‘No, I just eat here a lot.’ He [says,] ‘But you’re even nice to the dishwasher[s].’

“I’m like, ‘Well, haven’t you been taught you should be nice to everybody?’ So he’s like, ‘Yeah, but I didn’t think people actually behaved that way.’ So I just asked him, I’m like, you know, ‘What is it that you want out of life?’ He just had ... a sad face. Either he couldn’t answer me, or he didn’t want to.

“The bill came and I looked at him and I’m like, ‘Look, I guess you’re gonna have to pay for this bill, ’cause you have my money.... If you give me my wallet back, I’ll gladly treat you.’ He didn’t even think about it. He’s like, ‘Yeah, okay, here you go.’

So I got my wallet back. ... I gave him \$20 for ... you know, I figure maybe it will help him.... And when I gave him the \$20 I asked him to give me something in return.... And he gave ... me [his knife].”

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Julio Diaz concludes, “... I figure, you know, you treat people right, you can only hope that they treat you right. It’s as simple as it gets in this complicated world.”<sup>1</sup>

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Jesus said, “... If anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well....<sup>2</sup> Do unto others as you would have them do to you.”<sup>3</sup>

This is the triumph of the human spirit; what anthropologist Stephen Gould calls “the victorious weight of innumerable little kindnesses.”

*This is Easter. Easter is up to us.*

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Joanna Lubkin for sharing this story. Julio Diaz (social worker), interviewed by Steve Inskeep, host, “A Victim Treats His Mugger Right,” 3/28/14.

Please see [npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=89164750](http://npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=89164750)

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 5:39-41

<sup>3</sup> Luke 6:31

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In January of 1982, when he was 20, Hugh Herr and a friend were climbing Mt. Washington when they were caught in a blizzard and stranded in negative-twenty degrees for nearly four days. Trying to rescue them, volunteer Albert Dow died in an avalanche. When they were finally taken off the mountain, Hugh had lost his lower legs to frostbite.

He is now Dr. Hugh Herr, an engineer and director of the Biomechtronics Group. Last Spring, like many amputees, Hugh visited Boston Marathon bombing survivors at Spaulding Rehab to give them hope and courage. It was there that he met Adrienne Haslet-Davis, a professional dancer who had lost part of her left leg in the attack.

“After meeting her, I was driving home,” he says, “and I thought, ‘Well gosh, I’m an MIT professor, why not build her a bionic limb to allow her to dance?’ So I put together MIT scientists with expertise in prosthetics, robotics, machine-learning, bio-mechanics, and off we went.”

“We brought in dancers with biological limbs that were a similar size and weight,” Dr. Herr explains. “And ... using all of our equipment, ... we studied, ... how they [move,] and the forces they [apply] on the dance floor, and analyzed those data. It took many, many months, but here we are.”

Last month, Adrienne Haslet-Davis was back on stage, wearing a short dress to show off her bionic leg.<sup>4</sup> Her extraordinary dance performance – graceful and powerful – fulfilled the vision to which Hugh Herr committed himself on May 3<sup>rd</sup> of last year, when he said, “I believe Adrienne ... will dance [again, and].... I, ... along with other athletes using artificial limbs and wheelchairs.... will participate [in] a beautifully defiant statement to the world that we, the people, will not be intimidated, brought down, diminished, conquered, or stopped by acts of violence.”<sup>5</sup>

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Jesus said, “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul...<sup>6</sup> We “look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Please see [wbur.org/2014/03/19/Adrienne-haslet-hugh-herr-ted-talk](http://wbur.org/2014/03/19/Adrienne-haslet-hugh-herr-ted-talk)

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Hugh Herr, “Bionics and the Boston Bombing Victims,” May 3, 2013. Please see [blogs.wsj.com/speakeasy/2013/05/03/how-bionics-can-change-the-lives-of-the-boston-bombing-victims/](http://blogs.wsj.com/speakeasy/2013/05/03/how-bionics-can-change-the-lives-of-the-boston-bombing-victims/)

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 10:28

This is the triumph of the human spirit; “the victorious weight of innumerable little kindnesses.”

This is Easter. *Easter is up to us.*

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In the days and weeks after 9/11, a grassroots community of ’round-the-clock helpers manifested on the ragged edges of Ground Zero. A crew from New Orleans cooked up giant vats of Cajun food. Truckloads of new boots arrived for the workers whose own were melting off their feet in the smoldering wreckage. “Ten thousand volunteers of every political stripe, income level, race and sexual [orientation], of every religion and no religion, ... transubstantiated tragedy into an ad hoc affirmation of humanity’s indestructible goodness of heart.”<sup>8</sup>

Author Marc Ian Barasch tells this story.

“Joseph Bradley, a hardhat crane operator who had helped build the World Trade Center when he was twenty-two, ... volunteered to help pull up the wreckage. Like so many workers at the Site, he [was] overwhelmed... after his first night, ... sinking to the curb ... under the savagely bright arc lamps, his head cradled in his hands.

“That’s when [these] kids appeared,’ he remembers, ‘in their sneakers with their pink hair and their belly buttons showing and bandanas tied around their faces. They came with water and cold towels and took off my boots and put dry socks on my feet.

“And then, when I got to Houston Street, a bunch more of these kids, all pierced and tattooed, with multicolored hair, had made a little makeshift stage. They started to cheer as we came out, and that was it for me. I never identified with those people before, but I started crying, and I cried for four blocks.... I was taken so off guard.

“I got home and ... my wife ...asked, ‘Joe, are you okay?’ ‘Sure,’ I said. You know; the bravado [had come] back. But she said, ‘Are you sure? Go look in the mirror.’ There I was with my filthy dirty face and just two

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<sup>7</sup> 2 Peter 3:13

<sup>8</sup> Mark Ian Barasch, *Field Notes on the Compassionate Life*, p. 283

clean lines down from my eyes.’ His voice quavers ... slightly. ‘You become like a child after you get banged around a bit.’”<sup>9</sup>

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Jesus said, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>10</sup> “A new commandment I give unto you: That ye love one another. As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”<sup>11</sup>

This is the triumph of the human spirit; “the victorious weight of innumerable little kindnesses.”

This is Easter. *Easter is up to us.*

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Beloved spiritual companions,

In the face of utter devastation, in spite of everything,  
the undaunted human spirit:

*This is Easter.*

Easter in the subway and in a diner.

Easter in a rehab hospital and a prosthetics lab.

Easter in the ruined streets and staring back from the face in the mirror.

Easter in our minds, hearts, hands ...

Easter in our open minds, open hearts, open hands.

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Rilke prophesized,

All will come again into its strength:  
the fields undivided, the waters undammed,  
the trees towering and the walls built low.  
And in the valleys, people as strong  
and varied as the land.

And no churches where G\*d  
is imprisoned and lamented  
like a trapped and wounded animal.  
The houses welcoming all who knock  
and a sense of boundless offering  
in all relations, and in you and me.

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<sup>9</sup> Thanks to Kem Morehead for this story! Barasch, *op cit*, p. 284

<sup>10</sup> Mark 10:14

<sup>11</sup> John 13:34

No yearning for an afterlife, no looking beyond,  
no belittling of death,  
but only longing for what belongs to us  
and serving earth, lest we remain unused.<sup>12</sup>

This is Easter:  
*to Life!*

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<sup>12</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke, “All Will Come Again Into Its Strength,” from Anita Barrows and Joanna Macy, translators, *Rilke’s Book of Hours: Love Poems to God*, II,25, p. 121