





## REFLECTION

# The Prime Meridian and the Resurrection: Charting a Path

TREVOR BONAT, MA, MS  
Chief Mission Integration Officer, Ascension Saint Agnes

I felt a profound sense of awe wash over me as I stood on the prime meridian at the Royal Observatory in the London borough of Greenwich while on a college trip for my daughter, Jane. As a child growing up on the water on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, knowing how to find myself on a map using latitude and longitude was not just a fun exercise, but could be lifesaving in an unfortunate circumstance. Standing on the prime meridian, I felt the power of what is really just an idea — an objective line that all other longitudinal lines would reference — that provides the ability for anyone to communicate where they are and where they are going to anyone, anywhere, regardless of their location.

In 1851, Sir George Airy drew the line to aid in astronomical observations and improve the accuracy of nautical charts. A sextant and a reliable chronometer were the tools navigators used to pinpoint their place on any map sharing this common reference.

As I looked back at modern London from the hill across the River Thames where the observatory perches, I was struck by how this line still makes possible modern tools like navigation apps, cell phones, time zones and moonshots. My phone read zero degrees longitude, just as Airy's maps did close to 200 years ago. This idea serves as the foundation for technology today, allowing for globalization and the possibility of uniting disparate groups of peoples, and, devastatingly, the means of colonization and human destruction. The technology of our hospitals uses the time that

the prime meridian provides for our ministry of healing.

What other idea has had more impact on humanity? What Catholic truth is most present in our lives but so rarely recognized? More than the incarnation and Christ's teachings, healing ministry and crucifixion, the resurrection serves as the one reference point for everything else. During the Easter season and, indeed, the whole year around, the resurrection is the foundational reality that defines the whole of our faith. Paul names that line for us: "And if Christ has not been raised, then empty [too] is our preaching; empty, too, your faith. ... you are still in your sins." (1 Corinthians 15:14-17)

The resurrection brings to fullness the "good" in the Good News of the Gospel. Can Christ's preaching of the Kingdom of God and the healing

of the sick be interpreted independently from the resurrection? In our health care ministries, can we discern our missions independent of the resurrection as well? The *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services* are clear: “Catholic health care ministry bears witness to the truth that, for those who are in Christ, suffering and death are the birth pangs of the new creation.”<sup>1</sup> Christ’s resurrection facilitates the reality of hope in any situation we might find ourselves in, especially in unfortunate circumstances. Even people of different faiths and those of goodwill can name moments of resurrection in their own lives, instances where hardship turned to joy, peace and greater love.

How can we uncover the awe of the resurrection in our work in Catholic health care? How can we call to our consciousness the reality of resurrection in our work and lives? Admittedly, we can get leery of resurrection language in our emergency departments and intensive care units. The power of faith and hope runs counter to the devastation of death or, worse still, can perpetuate the illusion that we can avoid suffering and death to achieve healing, rebirth and/or resurrection. But the resurrection still provides the objective line that serves as our meridian of truth: that through suffering and death, joy awaits.

While we serve our patients and communities, we could ask these questions to ourselves and each other to find our bearings and chart a path to whatever resurrection is possible.

- Where is the resurrection in this?
- When might we experience it?
- Where are we on the path to resurrection?

*Let us pray.*

*Loving God,*

*You suffered, died and resurrected from the dead to conquer death and all that separates us from You. Open our eyes to the reality of Your resurrection that speaks to us through the daily resurrections in our ministries — the recovery of an ill infant, a lifesaving prescription made accessible to a disadvantaged mother, the reconciliation of estranged colleagues or the solace of a family in loss.*

*May Your resurrection harmonize the care and technology we use to bring about holistic healing in our patients and community. And when we are lost, suffering or experiencing death, may Your resurrection assist us in gaining our bearings and set us on a path of hope and grace.*

*Amen.*

**TREVOR BONAT** is chief mission integration officer for Ascension Saint Agnes in Baltimore.

**NOTE**

1. *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services: Sixth Edition* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2018), 6.

**PAUSE. BREATHE. HEAL.**

## *You Are Our Refuge*

For just this moment, bring your attention to your breath.

**INHALE** deeply and settle yourself into your body.

**EXHALE** the stress and tension you feel.

On your next inhale, pray, [You Are Our Refuge](#)

And as you exhale, [And Our Strength](#)

**You Are Our Refuge**

**And Our Strength**

**KEEP BREATHING** this prayer for a few moments.

*(Repeat the prayer several times)*

**CONCLUDE, REMEMBERING:** Even now, God is with you, as near to you as your breath.

Continue giving yourself the gift to pause, breathe and heal, knowing you are not alone.

---

*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. PSALM 46:1*

© Catholic Health Association of the United States



JOURNAL OF THE CATHOLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES

[www.chausa.org](http://www.chausa.org)

# HEALTH PROGRESS®

---

Reprinted from *Health Progress*, Summer 2024, Vol. 105, No. 3  
Copyright © 2024 by The Catholic Health Association of the United States

---