

In order for a car to operate it needs petrol: with petrol in the chamber, a spark plug fires causing a small explosion. The superheated expanding gas created by the explosion pushes a piston, which drives a crankshaft connected to an axle which in turn is connected to wheels which then turn to drive your car. That's what Wikipedia says anyway, though for all I know it might be that the little wheel-turning pixies like the taste of petrol and won't go anywhere till they've had a pint. However, put petrol in the tank and the car mysteriously moves, giving *you* an angry countenance, an opportunity to practice swearing, an extra two inches on your waist line and hypertension. Put soil, though, in your fuel tank and it will not work. I know this because my brother when he was a toddler did this to my grandad's brand new Hillman Humber. Back then cars didn't come with locking fuel caps. Happily grandads didn't come with big sticks either, or I would have quickly been an only child.

The plants in a typical suburban garden, cannot on the other hand, function without soil. It may seem a strange, revoltingly icky idea for us to spend our lives sitting in our dinner, but such is the botanical world. Without that strange mix of bacteria, minerals and rotting biomass that comprises the soil that fuels the plant kingdom, we would be deprived of food, medicines, clothes and something to impress passers by with as they gaze into our front gardens. Or something for them to tut at if it's mine.

On the other hand, soil is not directly supportive of the species *Arion hortensis*. Better known (on a superpolite & highly restrained sponsored no-swearing day) as the garden slug is fuelled by whatever is to be found in your garden that you have lavished the most care, love, time and attention on. With heartbreaking inevitability, your prized flora is devoured with surprising rapidity by the mouth that the demonic arthropod has on its foot, subjected to some slimy chemical processes before being transformed into a slightly bigger and more destructive slug. For a slug to operate normally it needs to fill itself with your plants and, like some monster from a Sixties edition of Star Trek, to consume the love you have lavished on them.

And for a human to operate normally you need not garden plants nor soil nor, despite the shocked squeals every time the prices at the pump rise, petrol. No, for a human to operate normally you need only to fill us with nonsense. Really. Forget money, forget love; without that thin layer of the fantastical between us and the harsh realities of nature red in tooth, claw and slime we simply could not survive. Without the carapace of porky-pies that encases our sensitive inner selves our chances of survival would be approximately that of a slug in a brine bath.

To live a long and happy human existence means swallowing the improbable, the implausible and the downright impossible in huge, greasy chunks with only the briefest of pauses between mouthfuls to draw breath.

I think the best way to demonstrate this is to take a quick look at some of our most cherished wisdom, those everyday aphorisms of common sense that quickly build up to make our world view- they can tell us most about what we think makes us what we are.

'Fighting never solves anything'. Everybody knows that. All parents tell it to their children; all teachers also tell it to those parents' children. Yet it is codswallop. All you need to do is turn on the television and you will learn that belligerence is an excellent solution for everything from what to do about Hitler to whether trifle or tarte tatin is the best dessert. I kid you not- I watched Harry Hill referee the last one. Fighting solves all sorts of things, just not in a very pleasant way.

'Time is money.' True, there is a class of pensioner who is often replete with both cash and leisure in which to spend it, but money cannot buy one second of time back, nor can time in any sense equate to income. We all hear the ticking of the same clock, but our wage packets have very different contents at the end of the week.

'Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise' Aw come one. If that were true, how come there are no rich priests? Or healthy ones come to that. Pull the other one, it's got bells & smells on it.

No, it is not money, it is not love, it is nonsense that turns the cogs and fires the pistons of our world.

With a foot very firmly in this world as well as the next Christianity asks you to swallow the biggest lot of nonsense of all: perhaps that is why it is still the most enduringly popular of the world's religions. At least if number of adherents is a measure of popularity.

Just think about what we are apt to serve you up. Angels and shepherds and wise men? Virgin births? Water into wine? Walking on water? A crucified God? And right at the end the really big one, the resurrection. Many have come with us this far; they have listened rapt to the angel's proclaiming his birth, they have sat glued to the

sermon on the mount, they have wondered in astonishment at the saviour's healing hands, they have even walked the way to Calvary. They have swallowed it all, and yet for many there is something about the Easter season, the resurrection, the empty tomb, the rising to new life, which is a step too far, the point where our faith becomes flapdoodle.

But the truth is simple. If you cannot believe this most preposterous of propositions then don't bother with rest. If for you the resurrection is just a conjuring trick with a bag of bones or something that occurred not physically but in the hearts of the disciples, well fine, you are a cynic or a humanist or possibly a Bishop in the Episcopal Church of the United States but you are not a Christian. We are a resurrection people: take away the resurrection and you take away our faith.

So the truth is simple and the truth, as the saying goes, is often stranger than fiction. Yet it is out of this strange idea of the resurrection, the belief that Jesus of Nazareth, crucified on Calvary dead and buried three days later rose again to a life transformed and everlasting; out of *this* truth grows the true vine, out of this truth, the true faith.

Today, as on every Sunday we celebrate the resurrection, that most ridiculous of notions without which our faith is nonsense. Those thousands of your neighbours in this parish who will not be in church on this or any other Sunday may think they have wised up, got real and grown out of childish beliefs. They have not. Yes you could be still dozing in bed, playing in the Sunday morning football league, driving to visit relatives, pushing a trolley round the shops; you could be doing one of the many hundreds of infantile things that fill most people's Sundays : instead you are in Church with other disciples of Christ celebrating the resurrection. I promise you there is no better place to be.