

Reflection for Friday of Easter Week 2020

Apart from the resurrection appearances of Jesus it is interesting to note that the disciples were in a kind of lockdown, self-isolating themselves from the Jewish authorities for fear of being captured and imprisoned. Acts only tells us what happened after Pentecost and the coming of the Spirit. In some ways we are just like those early followers of Jesus confined to barracks. In fact, throughout the Church's year, we seem to spend an awful lot of time waiting. Advent is spent waiting for the birth of Jesus. Lent is spent waiting and preparing for the death and resurrection of Jesus. Once risen we spend time waiting for the coming of the Spirit. But these times of waiting are important. These are the times we have to reflect more deeply on what has happened, what is happening and on what will happen in the future. In lockdown, people have discovered (or rediscovered) the beauty present in their gardens: the song of the birds, the magical and breath-taking colours of the flowers, even the manifold colours of green. Those who have let their gardens go uncultivated have been captivated by the wild charm they find there. For others it has been a time of discovering their creative abilities and organisational skills. It has given many the opportunity to see more clearly what is truly essential in life and of what is of prime importance. . . . Whatever discoveries and insights have been made will always be in preparation for the future and that future will always be about service. Time has been given to reflect on what kind of service to offer in the future. But, most important of all will be the reflection given to the motivation for that service. Will it be out of gratitude, will it be responding to the call to love our neighbour or will it be from a desire that finds its origin in love - a love that is not satisfied until it is shared with others?

The great mystic, St. Francis of Assisi, was a living symbol of selfless service who illumined hearts in the 13th century. He always felt a quiet but deep happiness in seeking out those who were rejected. These step-children of destiny, like all creatures who lived and suffered and died, were not only related to him, but were actually a part of him. His heart went out especially to the failures, the unfit, the misfits, those who could not "get on" in life, the weak whom nobody would employ, and the meek whom nobody would heed: *"The united ripples of one ocean, the integrated bodies of one soul, the unbreakable continuity of one eternal life,"* he emphasized, *"To me you are more than a brother or sister, you are an ailing member of my own flesh and blood; your pain is my pain,*

and your joy is my joy... It is the will of God that I should listen to all who are in distress."

And of course:

I just received a photo from a speed camera through the mail. I sent it right back – way too expensive and really bad quality.

The Man, The Boy, and the Hotel

A man and a young teenage boy checked in to a hotel and were shown to their room. The two receptionists noted the quiet manner of the guests, and the pale appearance of the boy. Later the man and boy ate dinner in the hotel restaurant. The staff again noticed that the two guests were very quiet, and that the boy seemed disinterested in his food. After eating, the boy went to his room and the man went to reception and asked to see the manager. The receptionist initially asked if there was a problem with the service or the room, and offered to fix things, but the man said that there was no problem of that sort, and repeated his request. The manager was called and duly appeared. The man asked to speak privately and was taken into the manager's office.

The man explained that he was spending the night in the hotel with his fourteen-year-old son, who was seriously ill, probably terminally so. The boy was very soon to undergo therapy, which would cause him to lose his hair. They had come to the hotel to have a break together, and also because the boy planned to shave his head, that night, rather than feel that the illness was beating him. The father said that he would be shaving his own head too, in support of his son. He asked that staff be respectful when the two of them came to breakfast with their shaved heads. The manager assured the father that he would inform all staff and that they would behave appropriately.

The following morning the father and son entered the restaurant for breakfast.

There they saw the four male restaurant staff attending to their duties, perfectly normally, all with shaved heads.