

Reflection Thursday Week 23 – 2020

You can see I have been influenced by St Paul and why I am vegetarian. Today he tells us *“I shall never eat meat again in case I am the cause of a brother’s downfall.”* In the gospel today, Jesus gives us excellent teaching and for me to think I could add anything would be over pretentious. I suggest you read and reread the Gospel again and again so the its spirit becomes your spirit – love, forgiveness, compassion, being non-judgemental.

We might not think we have much in common with the pagans and their gods as in the days of Jesus but pagan gods still exist today under other guises, and people still eat their food. Think of money and wealth, of status, selfish-achievement, self-importance etc. etc. Jesus wanted his followers, us, to take the lead; to set an example for others to follow not wait until someone else shows us the way. Martin Luther King said *“Now there is a final reason I think that Jesus says, “Love your enemies.” It is this: that love has within it a redemptive power. And there is a power there that eventually transforms individuals. Just keep being friendly to that person. Just keep loving them, and they can’t stand it too long. Oh, they react in many ways in the beginning. They react with guilt feelings, and sometimes they’ll hate you a little more at that transition period, but just keep loving them. And by the power of your love they will break down under the load. That’s love, you see. It is redemptive, and this is why Jesus says love. There’s something about love that builds up and is creative. There is something about hate that tears down and is destructive. So, love your enemies. (from “Loving Your Enemies”)”* The improvement of the local environment during lockdown shows us that creation is only too ready to forgive, to move forward and to renew its life for us and with us. We have much to learn from creation which is only too willing to teach us. A hymn from IONA:-

One day I said ‘sorry’, out loud, to the Earth.
I’m sorry I trampled each day since my birth.
And burned, tarred and wasted the gifts in my hands;
and passed off my greed as my Father’s Commands.
“Dear child”, said the Earth, “Since God shaped from my clay
humanity - one with my creatures that play.
There’s much of delight, as you till and protect,
and bring forth great wonders, and love and respect.
But yes, for this moment, you’re way out of line:
in selfish employ of your talents and time;
with poverty even of three billion kin
I’ve shown you already the mess we’re all in.
You’ve hurt me: I lash out, but I keep no grudge
And God who shapes all of us judges the judge.
I just want the pain and extinction to stop
I couldn’t care less now, who comes out on top!”
“Earth longs to forgive you” - a voice: was it Christ?
“When debt’s written off, shackles are sacrificed.
Forgiveness frees debtors to dance and rejoice:
Change course: choose forgiveness: know, you still have choice!

Alcohol may be man's worst enemy but the Bible says love your enemy.