

Reflection for 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B

Adverse weather and a lot of uncertainties have made the last couple of weeks difficult for many people. There are the usual questions: will it ever end, or will life ever return to normal? Most of us have probably now realised that the normal will be a “new normal” in time. The pandemic will, hopefully, end but when none of us know when that is likely to be. Many people are feeling exhausted mentally, psychologically and emotionally as their lives continue to be restricted in so many ways. For others, the lack of human contact and simply not being able to meet family and friends have proved to be a challenge. People are trying to cautiously look forward positively as the vaccine continues to be rolled out. Secondly, the thought of spring being on the horizon is a small light at the end of the tunnel. The human stories that put others before themselves are numerous, the most famous being Sir Tom Moore, (Captain Tom) who died earlier this week. His walks around the garden became a symbol of the human spirit, in a time of chronic need for the whole of humanity, to see that light could conquer darkness. Other stories and acts of kindness will also have taken place throughout the world and many local communities will have been able to pay tribute their own local heroes.

Many people, too, are struggling in their faith and are finding it difficult to see light at the end of the tunnel. The season of Lent is also on the horizon and, once again, many will have to suffer a certain emptiness as they struggle to do what they have traditionally done, no doubt for years, in Lent. Their support systems of faith are suffering from fatigue and they are looking for a new focus and sense of purpose. Their struggles may be silent but they are not hidden and often their faces tell a painful story a broken faith that is suffering. Actions, as they say, speak louder than words. They say that often the culture of encounter and the encounter with silence are more powerful expressions of faith than any human word or phrase. Perhaps these words from Tomas Halik, a priest from the Czech Republic, who has lectured throughout the world in philosophy and sociology may inspire us to keep our lives of faith alive and active at this time:

“Maybe our faith, too, was overwhelmed with lots of things, which had the nature of that “something” – our personal notions, projections, and wishes, all all-too-human expectations, our definitions and theories, the world of our stories and myths, our “Credulity.” Maybe we have not yet had our fill of all that and we want more: Give us more faith, more certainty and assurance in the face of life’s complexities!

But Christ says: “Have the faith of God,” not the “human” kind that could become lost among the ideologies and philosophies of our times. A “God kind of faith” means one that is minuscule, almost imperceptible, from the point of view of this world!

God who is preached and represented in this world by the One who was crucified and rose from the dead, is the God of paradox: what people consider wise, He considers folly, what people regard as madness and a stumbling block is wisdom in His eyes, what people see as weakness, He considers strength, what people consider great He sees as small and what they find small, He regards as great.

Are we, even in the blasts of the gale that continue to blow away so much of our religion – whether we have in mind the onslaught of atheistic criticism or the tempest of our doubts and inner crisis of faith, or the “spirit unfriendly” climate of the times – capable, the end, of discerning the liberating gust of the Holy Spirit just as the Israelites, thanks to their prophets, were able to discern “God’s lesson” in their defeat and “God’s servant in their enemy Nebuchadnezzar?”

Tomas Halik, “**Night of the Confessor: Christian faith in an age of uncertainty,**” pages 22/23