

Home Retreat with Fr Bede – Resources

Miracle

not the one who takes up his bed &
walks
but the ones who have known him all
along
& carry him in..

their shoulders numb, the ache & stoop
deeplocked,
in their backs, the stretcher handles
slippery with sweat..& no let up

until he's strapped on tight, made tiltable
& raised to the tiled roof, then lowered
for healing
be mindful of them as they stand & wait

for the burn of the paid out ropes to cool,
their slight lightheadedness &
incredulity
to pass, those who had known him all
along

miracle ; Seamus Heaney

Corpus Christi reflection Yr B

"take it" he said "this is my body" "take this all of you.."the mystery of faith; "when we eat this bread & drink this cup we proclaim your death O Lord, until you come again."..

..the "all of you" sits uncomfortably with my conscience because we don't mean it, it is rather like OT covenant relationship subject to terms & conditions, with an arbiter in Rome using different language & phraseology to Pope Francis..the party line "Roma locuta, causa finite" Rome has spoken, the matter is closed" how many victims do you know?..Abbot Cuthbert for one..when we hoped for mercy, for leniency, we got an additional four years for having the affrontery to appeal..someone we know very well..

In 2001 I spent a year in Dublin on a course on Formation & Leadership; each Wed evg I had a pastoral placement visiting prisoner in Mountjoy Prison; squalid frightening gaol built 150yrs ago & not penny spent on it since; each year it fails inspection by UN Commission on Human Rights, unfit for habitation, & it is cheaper to pay the fine than build a new prison. Met each Wed with James; to get to his cell I had to go through 15 doors each with prison officer to lock them behind me..a lockdown, you know the term very well by now..me locked in for 90mins, you for 14months, James for a lifetime; he had wife & two teenage children; second day in prison he received his first letter from his wife, tore it open looking expectantly for three key words you & I hunger for in our closest relationship of mindfulness consolation & devotion..instead he found four words "I want a divorce" in words of Anne Robinson fierce lady "you are the weakest link, goodbye"..a writ of dismissal. I would sit on the one chair, James on edge of bed..one evg he asked to borrow chair, put it on bed, got up on bed then the chair, & up high up in wall was tiny window, bars on outside &

on inside, he looked out & said "Fr Bede, do you know what I can see? I can see a bridge [outside prison] & one day Fr Bede, I'm going to walk across that bridge." Another night when I entered his cell noticed on bedside locker paper plate & piece of apple pie..offence in Ireland to have food in cell, & if caught he could get further 3 months on his sentence. We talked for perhaps an hour, then he reached across & handed me paper plate & piece of apple pie "I want you to have this, Fr Bede" my immediate reaction was to refuse it..stolen from prison kitchen earlier in day, would it taste as bad as the prison smelled? mix of urine, tobacco smoke & drugs..& suddenly mindfulness kicked in, & I thought of Our Lords words at the Last Supper, in our gospel here & now.."take this [all of you] & eat it, this is my body". I had gone as a monk-priest to visit James, & here he was, the priest, offering me the eucharist, in the footsteps & words of Christ, all he had in the world to show how much he loved me; Christ in the disguise of James "do this in memory of me" [& where pray did Pope Francis spend his first Maundy Thursday washing feet of todays disciples, but in a prison in Rome] a story an experience of mindfulness, consolation & devotion, where we feel experience the providence of God active in our life, a real covenant relationship where we are the sole beneficiaries..three grains of yeast for your family eucharists; tell your nearest & dearest, at your breakfast tables out there, in our choir stalls in community, the three key words, five times daily, especially in lockdown. I hope you, like James, have a dream..hold onto your dream hopefully, & it will, like his, in time, come true; lastly someone will come into your life at some stage, & be in need of the last thing you feel you can let go of..your last piece of apple pie; the making of you is when you are minded, consolatorily devotionally, to give it away "anyone who eats this bread will live forever, my flesh [James' flesh] for the life of the world" a new covenant ratified by James in persona Christi..

& the question which often emerges from school groups, never afraid to ask for the truth, "Fr Bede, did you eat the apple pie?" ..

Tablets of stone/hearts of stone, written in indelible ink, prison regulations & a charge sheet logging a life sentence, through the prayerfulness & action of Christ in disguise, become divine words written on James's heart, & on the hearts of those of us humble truthful enough to admit to our own prison sentence in our own invisible prisons for spiritual & relational felonies over many years, with the divine words "guilty, forgiven & mine forever" ..

"taste & see that the Lord is good" ..
"Fr Bede, did you eat the apple pie?" ..

Corpus Christi; Mk 14;12-16.22-26]

..& why pray, like MP's expenses, has the editor kept back from you verses 17-21?..

"We were made for these times"

..three readings; three windows on your Advent calendar, not with a chocolate behind each but a word/ phrase which, when woven /stitched together, set the tone & context for our Advent 2019.."come..know "the time" has come..so stay awake"..I received two pastoral letters this week; our traditional Advent one from Bishop Terence which I leave for you to take home to choose the time & to read/pray/reflect on..focuses on this new Church year being "the Year of the Word..the God who speaks" ..who speaks through scripture the liturgy & in person 20 times day in ordinary real life..in 3 retreats I have led this last wk..in one of most difficult groups I have ever worked with in 20yrs, as God spoke to me through them..second pastoral letter spoke sufficiently powerfully to me for me to want to share its wisdom with you, as we begin our journey towards the manger

together..”so stay awake!” no question of you falling asleep..authors name gives spice from the start..

Clarissa Pinkola Estes “we were made for these times” written 13 days ago so straw is still warm.. “my friends, do not lose heart.We were made for these times. I have heard from so many recently who are deeply & properly bewildered. They are concerned about the state of affairs in our world now. Ours is a time of almost daily astonishment, & often righteous rage over the latest degradations of what matters to civilised, visionary people. You are right in your assessments; the lustre & hubris some have aspired to while endorsing acts so heinous against children, elders, everyday people, the poor the unguarded, the helpless is breathtaking. Yet, I urge you, ask you, gentle you, to please not spend your spirit dry by bewailing these difficult times. Especially do not lose hope. Most particularly because,

the fact is we were made for these times. Yes, for years we have been learning, practising been in training for, & just waiting to meet on this exact plain of engagement.

I grew up on the Great Lakes & recognise a seaworthy vessel when I see one. Regarding awakened souls, there have never been more able vessels in the waters than there are right now across the world; & they are fully provisioned & able to signal one another as never before in the history of humankind. Look out over the prow; there are millions of righteous souls on the waters with you. Even though your veneers may shiver from every wave in this stormy roil, I assure you that the long timbers composing your prow & rudder come from a greater forest. That long-grained lumber is known to withstand storms, to hold together, to hold its own & to advance, regardless. In any dark time there is tendency to veer towards fainting over how much is wrong or unmended in the world. Do not focus on that. There is a tendency too, to fall into being weakened by dwelling on what is outside your reach, by what you cannot yet be. Do not focus there. That is spending the wind without raising the sails.

We are needed, that is all we can know; & though we meet resistance, we more so will meet great souls who will hail us, love us & guide us, & we will know them when they appear. Didn't you say you were a believer? Didn't you say you pledged to listen to a voice greater? Didn't you ask for grace? Don't you remember that to be in grace means to submit to the voice greater?

Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach. Any small calm thing that one soul can do to help another soul, to assist some portions of this poor suffering world, will help immensely. It is not given to us to know which acts or by whom, will cause the critical mass to tip towards an enduring good. What is needed for dramatic change is an accumulation of acts, adding, adding to & adding more continually. We know that it doesn't need everyone on earth to bring justice & peace, but only a small determined group who will not give up during the first, second or hundredth gale.

One of the most calming & powerful actions you can do to intervene in a stormy world is to stand up & show your soul. Soul on deck shines like gold in dark times; the light of the soul throws sparks, can send up flares, builds signal fires, causes proper matters to catch fire. To display the lantern of soul in shadowy times like these; to be fierce & to show mercy towards others; both are acts of immense bravery & greatest necessity.

Struggling souls catch light from other souls who are fully lit & willing to show it; if you would help to calm the storm, this is one of the strongest things you can do. There will always be times when you feel discouraged. I too have felt despair many times in my life, but I do not keep a chair for it. I will not entertain it; it is not allowed to eat from my plate.

The reason is this; in my uttermost bones I know something, as you do. It is that there can be no despair when you remember why you came to earth, who you serve, & who sent you here. The good words we say & the good deeds we do are not ours. They are the words & deeds of the One who brought us here. In that spirit, I hope you will write this on your wall; when a great ship is in harbour & moored, it is safe, there can be no doubt. But that is not what great ships are built for.”

“..come..know the time has come..so stay awake” & now let us set sail into our Advent..

[1st Sun Advent YrA ; Mt 24; 37-44]

..as we prepare to set sail into a new beginning, a spiritual Advent, on 21 June 2021, let us take with us the few essentials..

..to voice the three key words to our crew members often

..to hold on to our dream, the divine voice calling us towards it over the horizon

..be prepared, in loving self-sacrifice, to give away your life-jacket

Esperanza – Hope

When the storm has passed
& the roads are tamed,
& we are the survivors
of a collective shipwreck.

we'll understand how fragile
it is to be alive.
we'll sweat empathy
for those still with us & those who are gone

with tearful heart
& our destiny blessed
we will feel joy
simply for being alive

we'll miss the old man
asking for a buck in the market
whose name we never knew
who was always at your side

& we'll give a hug
to the first stranger
& praise our good luck
that we kept a friend.

& maybe the poor old man
was your God in disguise
but you never asked his name
because you never had the time.

& then we'll remember
all that we lost
& finally learn
everything we never learned.

& all will become a miracle
& all will become a legacy.
& we'll respect the life,
the life we have gained.

& we'll envy no one
for all of us have suffered
& we'll not be idle
but more compassionate.

when the storm passes
I ask you, Lord, in shame
that you return to us better,
as you once dreamed us.

We'll value more what belongs to all
than what was earned
we'll be more generous
& much more committed.

Alexis Valdes

Blessing

Whirlwind Spirit of God
roar through our timidities & fears
shake the foundations of our ill-placed securities
sweep away the cobwebs of our apathy
blow down the walls that separate us, one from another.

Then into our empty spaces, breathe
re-strengthened courage to challenge injustice
renewed belief in the urgency of our vocation
revitalised passion to change our lifestyles
re-dedication to speak only words that build & unite.

Let gentle breeze & still small voice
become in us today
mighty wind & loud proclamation
make of us a Pentecost people!

[from Cafod]