

Reflection for Sixth Sunday of Easter 2020

“Reverence the Lord Christ in your hearts, and always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have. But give it with courtesy and respect and with a clear conscience.” (1 Peter 3:15-18)

These words are spoken by Saint Peter and they form the opening sentence of today’s second reading for the Sixth Sunday of Easter.

I feel that this instruction from Saint Peter is especially significant for us enduring as we are the painful effects of Covid 19.

I think that we would all agree that this period of social distancing, and for some enforced isolation, has made us re-examine our priorities, has given us time to reflect on what is of true importance in our lives.

I was speaking with my spiritual director and he spoke of the renewed interest/upsurge in prayer and of people engaging with the opportunities presented by Social Media for rekindling the gift of Faith. I do hope that during the remainder of this present pandemic, and in its aftermath, that we, as missionary disciples, will be called upon to ***“have our answer ready for people who ask us the reason for the hope that we have..”***

I believe that it is fertile ground for sowing the seeds of Faith and Hope in the hearts of our neighbour.

We may feel however that owing to social distancing the opportunities for sharing the joy of the Gospel are severely restricted. This may be true to a certain extent and therefore we might use this time as a time of preparation.

In other words, let us use this time for interiorising the values and virtues of the kingdom. Let us immerse ourselves in the abiding presence of the Blessed Trinity. Let us submerge ourselves in this ocean of divine mercy and love, let us come to the water and drink from the streams of His great kindness.

I remember my aunt, who was a Missionary Sister (a Medical Missionary of Mary) writing to her spiritual director, Father Hugh Kelly S.J., shortly after she had left Ireland for the Makiungu Catholic Mission in Tanzania explaining to him that she was not as active pastorally as she had been when in the Motherhouse in Drogheda. He wrote back to her:

“Don’t be disconcerted at the fact that you are not as active in your particular place as you were in Drogheda. Rather take it that God is giving you a chance to build up a more intense spiritual life while you are at Singida. You may be quite certain that it is not like this in many other places: in fact the usual complaint is that there is not enough time to get in the prayers of rule. So – take the chance that God gives you and deepen your devotion to the Sacred Heart and the Blessed Sacrament. This is for you a season of plenty when you must gather with both hands and fill the barns: the lean years will come and perhaps sooner than you expect.”

So too for us, when we feel a little in the doldrums let us use this opportunity to deepen our devotion to the Sacred Heart and to the Blessed Sacrament, so that we will be filled with a renewed love for Christ and the desire to make Him known and loved.

My aunt has kindly given me a copy of Father Hugh’s letters to her in a bound volume. In the introduction to the volume she quotes Father Hugh:

“So glad to read your drawing to the Beata Trinitas. That is the end of all. He will draw us into His blessed eternal life – gather us in His arms. Let us live in the hope of that blessed ending.”