



ASSUMPTION

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RESURRECTION

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3 April 2020

Dear Parishioners,

As we enter Holy Week, even though, in this time of pandemic, none of us can celebrate this most sacred time together, we can nevertheless experience it as a communion with Christ – walking in his path – and through our common unity with Christ, experience it somehow together, in fellowship.

I was re-reading some short stories by Somerset Maugham this week. He was the most successful English author during the period between the two world wars, a time of great change and an era which had entirely lost the confidence, so prevalent in the Victorian era, of the constant march of progress and science. Men had killed each other by the millions in the First World War, and then, following hard upon that tragic human suffering, even more persons died by the pandemic of the Spanish flu.

The evil of war was followed by the faceless evil of sickness, disease and death: the evil inflicted by the failure of responsible free will, followed by an evil inflicted by a disorder in the natural world.

Somerset Maugham is considered in some ways as a “voice of his generation”, evoking a feeling of the senselessness and futility of life, of irremediable unhappiness. The only thing that mattered was that life be endured; he was a writer who could “look upon the trivial with such tender sympathy and wring such a delicate pathos from futility” (“The Alien Corn”).

- There is a danger in such an attitude: nothing matters. Live for today as if there are is no tomorrow.
- It is the opposite of Christian hope: live today as if *everything* matters: live today as if tomorrow shall last an eternity.

We are confronted today with the faceless evil of another pandemic. Where once there was health, there is now sickness; where once there was confidence, there is now fear.

What will be the voice of *this* generation?

Holy Week is a moment to reflect on the scandal of evil, which can never be wholly avoided. Christ faced that evil, and in his confrontation in the first Holy Week he gives us to hope that evil shall never have the last word. Yielding to a sense of futility is the abandonment of hope. No life, no moment is absolutely trivial, is never futile.

The road of hope is paved with small steps of hope.

The life of hope is made of brief moments of hope.

Holy Week is a time to reflect on the foundation of our hope, and on the present suffering that is, in some mysterious way, a pledge of victory if we learn to bear it out of love for God, who bore his suffering out of love for us: “Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps” (1 Peter 2:21). The suffering of Christ did not rob his work of meaning; rather, suffering was the currency and coinage of union with his Father and our Father.

And so through the Passion of Christ which we relive this Holy Week, we find buried already the seed of our Easter hope:

I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God. (Jn 20:17)

Fr. Philip Creurer

PRAYER OF CONFIDENCE AND HOPE

In the darkness of this night,
in the midst of this ocean of anxiety, of nightmares,
I slowly wake up again:
"I must confront reality:
I am in prison.
If I wait for an opportune moment
to do something truly great,
how many times will such occasions actually
present themselves?
No, I will seize the occasions that present themselves
every day.
I must accomplish ordinary actions, in an
extraordinary way."

Jesus, I will not wait,
I will live the present moment,
filling it to the brim with love.

A straight line is made of millions of tiny points
one united to another.
My life, too, is made of millions of seconds
united to each other.
If I arrange every single point perfectly
the line will be straight.
If I live every minute perfectly
my life will be holy.

The road of hope is paved with small steps of hope.
The life of hope is made of brief moments of hope.

As you, Jesus, always did what pleased your Father,
every minute I want to say:
Jesus, I love you,
and my life is always "a new and eternal covenant"
with you.
Every minute I want to sing with your Church:
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

Venerable Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan

Cardinal Nguyen Van Thuan was detained by the communist government of Vietnam in a re-education camp for thirteen years, nine in solitary confinement. In prison, he smuggled out messages to his people on scraps of paper. The brief reflections, copied by hand and circulated within the Vietnamese community, have been printed in the book, *The Road of Hope*. Another book, *Prayers of Hope*, contains his prayers written in prison. The bishop fashioned a tiny Bible out of scraps of paper. Sympathetic guards smuggled in a piece of wood and some wire from which he crafted a small crucifix.