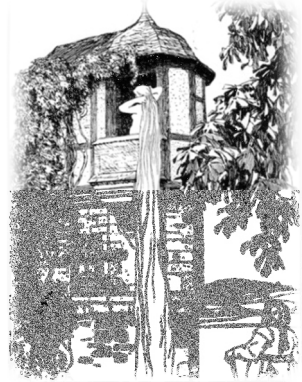


Letters from Lockdown

Hi everybody,

I guess I'm in a 'Rapunzel' moment where I feel trapped in my little tower of isolation, longing to be rescued by a shining knight who will turn the situation around, solve the problem so I can go back to live in the happily ever after. This experience of COVID 19 seems surreal, as if I was in an unpleasant dream and searching for a door to let myself out.



I hear the language of 'whatiffery' and 'whataboutery' around me as I wonder how the heck we're going to recover from this. The tsunami of news, advice, regulations, plans, and all manner of notification, flood my in tray, increasing my sense of guilt tinged helplessness.

Somehow the church's agenda seems to have been placed on hold and the Easter story seems rather tame and distant ...

- but this is not so! People of faith have always seen parallels between the biblical narratives and their current situations and have sought to bring commentary and interpretation (*Midrashim*) to bear on their lives; Easter being a case in point.

Scriptures (of various faiths) bear testimony that suffering is a universal phenomenon. Even the ancient Greeks wrote many plays around the theme of tragedy, seeking to expose the paradoxical nature of suffering and its effect on healing, growth and maturity. The story of the cross begins some time before that when Jesus, after having proved and established himself in Galilee for the past three years, asks his followers "who do you say I am?" (i.e. 'have you got it yet?'). After the subsequent declaration of Peter ("You are the Christ, Son of the living God"), he then speaks of going to Jerusalem to face his gruesome death at the hands of his enemies! The disciples are stunned! Peter indignantly and with newly acquired importance, tries to refute this vision but is rebuked by Jesus. He then invites his followers to accompany him in this journey! Why does Jesus seem to seek out suffering? Come to think of it, is this not the core of the Christian paradox – the all suffering yet powerful God?

Perhaps the answers may be found not in our doctrine's, creeds and theological mindsets but in the experiences, encounters and angst filled moments of faith. The disciples, strengthened and buoyed by what they had witnessed of Jesus' ministry step forward in confidence as they began their journey, but along the way they encountered situations and teachings that slowly stripped them of their illusions of competency, favouritism, security, certainty, authority, power and influence. They learned utter dependency on the love of God. They were striped of all that we, even today, falsely lean on to get through these Rapunzel moments which seem like an incoming freight train! They saw in the cross just how far God will go to love each one of us; a love that does not end there at the cross – I am reminded of Churchills words after the disaster of Dunkirk: *"Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."*

I will close this offering with a quote from Seamus Heaney (1939 – 2013) a celebrated Irish poet:

Believe that a further shore
is reachable from here.
Believe in miracles
and cures and healing wells.
Call the miracle self-healing:
The utter self-revealing
double-take of feeling.
If there's fire on the mountain
Or lightning and storm
And a god speaks from the sky
That means someone is hearing
the outcry and the birth-cry
of new life at its term.

Till the next time I let my hair down!

Leigh