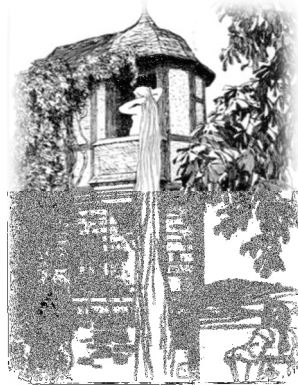


## Letters from Lockdown

Hi everybody,

Greetings from Rapunzel's tower. The story of Rapunzel reminded me of the Scripture which says that *"if a woman has long hair, it is her glory (1 Cor 11:15)"*, Rapunzel's rescuer used her shining locks to gain entrance and ended her 'shut down'.



Well, I tried letting my hair down but it is a little thin on top so I thought that perhaps I could try growing a beard instead! The longest beard ever grown (so far) in history is 17'6" and belongs to Hans Langseth, who died in 1927. Somehow, I doubt mine will grow that long!

But it got me thinking about social norms and customs, and the ways society patrols its identity, using things such as isolation, gossip etc. to voice its disapproval of what is deemed acceptable. This unique phase of history has given us a window into human social thinking and behaviour all over the world. Causes and leaders are tested and, in some cases, found wanting. Others have excelled. But we should not forget that they are products of their societies. They have risen out of the ranks and values that support them (even the dictators). This is the curse and the blessing of all creation, namely, that we are both individuals and yet social communities. Each needs the strengths and weakness of the other in order to maintain a balance.



Jesus emerged out of a thoroughly Jewish community. At an early age he was steeped in its traditions and values; he recruited fellow Jews and taught and healed in Jewish villages and towns. However, a reading of the scriptures written after the events of his life, reveal how open he was to 'gentiles', those of 'other' ethnic persuasion.

The book of Acts describes how, slowly, the true inclusiveness of love trumped (no pun intended) the isolation and rejection of those who did not 'conform' to cultural, religious or political views. One of the huge bridges the early church crossed – bearing in mind that it was a church that was initially Jewish – was the acceptance of gentiles from all cultures and classes without having to become (through the rite of circumcision) Jews first. Since then there has been many bridges crossed, slavery, racism, woman's rights, gender sensitivity, amongst others. Mind you, not without cost!

Saturday is ANZAC day, and, as we remember the sacrifices given for freedom, we should never forget that both sides loose (there are no winners in a war). Jesus refused to be intimidated into silence and stood up to be counted for inclusive love. Is it not *that* which shows the true meaning of resurrection. Perhaps in the sense of mutuality and sharing engendered by this lockdown crisis, we may be healed of more than COVID-19. May the scales of fear and selfishness fall at the touch of love.

I close with a poem we have had for many years which I had all but forgotten. I think it has a poignant message for all humanity at this decisive moment in the history of our world.

Till the next time I let my hair down, or my beard grows...

Leigh

*The Cold Within* - James Patrick Kinney.

Six humans trapped by happenstance  
in black and bitter cold  
each one possessed a stick of wood  
or so the story's told.

Their dying fire in need of logs  
The first woman held hers back  
for on the faces around the fire  
she noticed one was black

The next man looking cross the way  
saw one not of his church,  
and couldn't bring himself to give  
the fire stick of birch.

The third one sat in tattered clothes  
He gave his coat a hitch  
Why should his log be put to use  
to warm the idle rich?

The rich man just sat back and thought  
of the wealth he had in store  
and how to keep what he had earned  
from the lazy, shiftless poor.

The black man's face bespoke revenge  
as the fire passed from his sight  
For all he saw in his stick of wood  
was a chance to spite the white.

And the last man of this forlorn group  
did naught except for gain  
Giving only to those who gave  
was how he played the game.

The logs held tight in death's still hands  
were proof of human sin.  
They didn't die from the cold without,  
they died from the cold within.

