

It helps now & then to step back
& take the long view.
The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts;
it is beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a fraction
of the magnificent enterprise that is Gods work.
Nothing we do is complete,
which is another way of saying that
the kingdom always lies beyond us.
No statement says all that could be said..
no prayer fully expresses our faith..
no confession brings wholeness..
no programme accomplishes the churchs mission
no set of goals & objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about;
we plant the seeds that one day will grow.
We water seeds already planted,
knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces effects
far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything,
& there is a sense of liberation in realising that.
This enables us to do something, & to do it very well.
It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning,
a step along the way, an opportunity for
the Lords grace to enter & do the rest.

We may never see the end results
but that is the difference
between the master builder & the worker.
We are workers, not master builders,
ministers not messiahs.
We are prophets of a future not our own.

[Oscar Romero]

Home Retreat; Saturday 12 October 2024

“..we were made for these times..”

..chosen born nurtured & entrusted to make a real difference to real life & real faith
October 2024..

- Our chosenness, our divine lineage, is written in scripture, where the “you” of thousands of years ago in bible prefigures “you” & me now..Oct 2024..the realised eschatology; the end of the world, the last times, being realised made flesh/present in the here & now..a constant incarnational coming to birth with & within the Kingdom of God made present..

..some of beautiful scriptural phrases of OT & NT are applicable to you & I..

..listen to them & let them seep into you as truth as gift unearned unmerited pure gift from the divine Creator who, with our parents, brought us to birth in human life within our divinity which began millions of years ago & continues everlastingly..

“before I formed you in the womb, I knew you..” [Jeremiah 1:5]

“I set you apart, I appointed you as prophet to the nations” ..you & I to speak out..

“you are precious in my eyes & I love you” [Isaiah 45:4]..steady look of divine love

“you are the apple of my eye” [Deut 32:10] ..held in palm of His hand loved tasted

“I will do anything for you” [Jn 14:14] ..the one who asks always receives Thurs gsp

- ..we are nurtured not mentored..
..a mentor takes on an apprentice to help the apprentice to gradually become as good in the chosen field as the mentor..
whereas
..a nurturer takes on an apprentice & achieves their goal as a nurturer when the apprentice becomes even better in the chosen field than the nurturer..
[a beautiful explanation from an Australian Cistercian monk Fr Michael Casey]

..& we are entrusted with gift of life & faith..loaned to invest best selves in it in order to grow it on so as to pass it on more precious authentic for its time in our care..

..as a newly ordained Deacon receives book of gospels, the presiding Bishop says this prayer..so fitting for you & I as heralds of the Gospel, each & every one of us:

receive the Gospel of Christ whose herald you have become
believe what you read
teach what you believe
& practice what you teach..

- ..with this “anchor” of explanation of how gifted & chosen we are as front line disciples in our country & our faith..Saturday 12 October 2024 feast of St Wilfrid of Ripon, we ask in faith & discipleship alongside Our Lady “how can this come about?”
Why me?..& why now?..& what difference could I make?
& vitally what difference have I been called chosen empowered to make?
..in belief..in teaching..& in practice

- In Nov 2019 I was Parish Priest here in our local Village in the Church of Our Lady & St Benedict, where I had been since 2012 & was to stay until 2021..9 precious years & in late Nov 2019 I read an article entitled “we were made for these times” written by a lady whose name you will never forget..Clarissa Pinkola Estes..

..it was written just a month before some strange virus had been discovered in Wutan in China which was taxing the medical profession, & which was to change to face of the earth; coronavirus; lockdown inoculations masks isolation illness & mounting death roll with our hospitals overwhelmed as the waiting lists still reflect pandemic

“we were made for these times”

..for war in Ukraine; atrocities in Israel Gaza & Lebanon; droughts in East Africa; the loss of life at sea as migrants dream of new life in Europe or UK..of hate crime, racial abuse, child sexual abuse, the contaminated blood scandal, the postmasters computer scandal & false imprisonment..the loss of winter fuel payments..Hurricanes global warming, drugs vapes alcohol & tobacco abuse, & obesity..

“we were made for these times”

..is it coincidence or the work of the Holy Spirit that we should find ourselves “find our real selves” learning how to become fully human & divine in midst of such crises & opportunities?..”an opportunity for the Lord’s grace to enter & do the rest” as Archbishop Oscar Romero said just before his assassination; 24 March 1980..

”we are prophets of a future not our own”..

- ..read to you Clarissa’s prose of 17 Nov 2019 & invite you to recognise in it someone you know very well..

“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 most 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 boats 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 a tendency towards fainting over how much is wrong or unattended 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 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. And though we meet resistance, we more so will meet great souls who will hail us, love us & guide us, and 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 portion 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 toward an enduring good.

What is needed for dramatic change is an accumulation of acts, adding, adding to, adding more, continuing. We know that it does not take 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 matter 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 tumult, 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. 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 works 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.”

- ..how close to home, to our spirituality & our heart this piece is..a piece written for us in these times, to affirm us in our presence, our real presence as we learn each day how to become more fully human & more fully divine..divinely nurtured to become more fully authentic in our discipleship..

..& having handed on this special piece to you, to pray again the Bishop's words as he entrusts the Gospel of Christ, the really Good News, to his deacon..& now to you & I;
..receive the Gospel of Christ whose herald you have become
believe what you read
teach what you believe
& practice what you teach..

- On line for you to muse on later in your Retreat Day I leave you;

the text of Archbishop Oscar Romero "we are prophets of a future not our own"
my notes for this talk this morning
copy of my text from Home Prayers of last Thursday which was live streamed
a brief note on life of St Wilfrid of Ripon monk abbot Bishop of York &
Hexham he introduced Rule of St Benedict into northern England
it is his feastday today

& thank you for being here..

[blessing]

On Monday this week Pope Francis asked us, the Church & the World, to join him in praying the Rosary for World Peace, on a Special Day of Prayer & Fasting. At lunchtime Abbot Robert, our Community & some of our staff & parishioners from the Village joined us at our new Marian Garden to pray the Rosary in front of the statue there of Mary Mother of Hope. It was a most beautiful autumn day & the gardens hung on to the last colours of the summer. I happened to be standing in the circle round the statue, sideways on to Our Lady, & I was struck by how upright she is depicted in the stone carving..a “certainty” in stance & a face which “understands”; she draws you into her presence with a surety..she hears & she too hopes alongside us, her prayers & her hopes united to ours as we prayed for the cessation of violence war & injustice throughout the world, & particularly this week in the Holy Land..& our gospel of today strengthens that hope & prayer in support of the restoration of peace “a peace the world cannot give..”

”look not on our sins but on the faith of your Church” words we pray at each Mass..

St Luke Ch 11 “so I say to you; Ask, & it will be given to you..for the one who asks always [always always] receives”..a divine promise, to have our prayers heard & answered..from a wonderful Marian Garden gifted to us by the Lai family in Hong Kong..

Jimmy Lai is a British National age 76; he is a media owner, writer & pro-democracy campaigner; his newspaper Apple Daily was closed down by Hong Kong government as his publishings stood up to China’s leadership; he has already spent three & a half years in prison in solitary confinement, & his trial continues; his three children came here to Ampleforth College, & he & his wife Teresa wanted to donate funds to build the Marian Garden..whilst it is tragic to imagine contrast between Jimmy’s conditions in his cell with the beauty of our garden here, the two epitomise the fullness of the gospel, where Jesus himself underwent the trauma of Gethsemane & then the joy of the Easter garden, as he too, in his human desolation, his solitary confinement when his three favourite trustees, at his darkest hour, fell asleep, he prayed in hope for an answer “Father, let it be as you, not I, would have it”, as hope matured into certainty & understanding that the divine will of his Father had to be done..”ask” & so often we ask for an answer, often timed & in precise detail, when surely the real ask & it’s divine answer is when we, like Mary at the Annunciation, placed herself & her hopes into the hands of God himself, & she said..& we hope for the grace to say with hope courage & an emerging certainty of it being answered “let it be done to me according to your Word”..to say “yes” to the “it” & in the “it”; on Saturday, in our Home Retreat, I am to share a prose called “we were made for these times” as our world holds its breath in relation to the atrocities in Gaza, now Lebanon, & will it be Iran next? as Israel wreaks revenge for 7 Oct 2023, as the Biden administration are led, seemingly powerless, ever further into potentially a world conflict..& our continuing misuse of the garden of Eden created for us to steward & enjoy, imposing Hurrican Milton on Florida..their governor Ron deSantis in his last briefing before hurricane made landfall said “our authorities are prepared & we will respond..& there is still hope” hope that the hurricane could weaken & be downgraded to a category 4 storm..in Florida, Gaza, Lebanon, in Jimmy Lai’s cell & in our Marian Garden, & in your own home, there is still prayer & there is still hope..”the one who asks always receives”..a crucial sentence in my Home Retreat offering says powerfully & gracefully “it is not given to us to know which acts or by whom, will cause the critical mass to tip toward an enduring good.” ..in other words, your prayer for the Middle East conflict this morning, from your home, could tip the world towards a cease-fire & peace negotiations..

[Home Prayers; 10 October 2024]

• Saturday 12 October 2024

Feastday of St Wilfrid of Ripon [secondary patron of Diocese of Middlesbrough]

Born 633 AD studied at Lindisfarne; influenced by its Celtic spirituality from Iona & later studies in Canterbury [influenced by Roman spirituality under Augustine of Canterbury] & Rome

AD 660 Abbot of newly founded monastery at Ripon

AD 664 spokesperson for Roman position at Synod of Whitby under Hilda

Appointed Bishop of Northumbria at Hexham; he travelled to Gaul to be consecrated & in his long absence Ceadda appointed Bishop in his place

AD 668 new Archbishop of Canterbury Theodore deposed Ceadda & restored Wilfrid ..he led a chequered life, quarrelling with Northumbrian kings & Archbishop, he was expelled twice & appealed to Pope who upheld his appeal, & he was reinstated as Abbot of Ripon & Bishop of Hexham

He was a champion of Roman customs & a supportive advocate of monasticism, & was responsible for introducing the Rule of St Benedict into Northern England.

AD 669 Bishop of York & built monastery at Hexham

AD 706 he retired to Ripon from Hexham

AD 709 died & buried at Ripon

Bede & Alcuin were among notable scholars who emerged from Northumbrian monasticism influenced by Wilfrid

“he seems to have been able to attract & infuriate in equal measure”

One Chapter [Ch 68] in Rule of St Benedict indicates its realism & gentleness

Chapter 68 the response to orders that seem impossible

“if instructions are given to anyone in the Community which seem too burdensome or even impossible, then the right thing is to accept the order in a spirit of uncomplaining obedience. However, if the burden of this task appears to be completely beyond the strength of the monk or nun to whom it has been assigned, then there should be no question of a rebellious or proud rejection, but it would be quite right to choose a good opportunity & point out gently to the superior the reasons for thinking the task is really impossible.

If the superior, after listening to this submission, still insists on the original command, then the junior must accept that it is the right thing & with loving confidence in the help of God obey.”