

Thought for the Day: 14-21 June

Melanie Seward, Lay Reader

Monday

Channel-hopping in the evening, I watched a TV series called *True Crime*. I asked myself: 'How can a human being come to commit such a horrendous crime?' Yet it was possible to quickly make a list of 'what ifs', choices shut down and mitigating factors. We are capable of doing some very wrong things, but the Bible says we are made in the image of God; that is human beings reflect something of the love and generosity God.

The selfless giving of key workers, neighbours offering help, the work of charities and faith communities seem to witness to this whilst the perpetuation and worsening of racial and social inequalities, hoarding and profiteering, show 'the other side of the coin'. We have an enormous capacity to love but, also, the ability to do otherwise; after all, in the words of the singer Stormzy, "I'm only human". Can these words used as an excuse for wrongdoing or a deep sympathy for the human condition, can they express a hopelessness that says things will never be different or be an inspiration to nurture and build up?

Only God is perfect;
perfect friendship and
perfect communion. In the
words of Richard Rohr, if
as the Trinity, "God is an
event of communion and I
am created in this image,
then I am an event



communion – this same flow is my deepest self and my

deepest identity". He argues that our true understanding of relationships or our authentic human mode of being must be shaped by a loving and merciful God. In other words, we are not 'only' human, we have the God given gifts to create loving communities working in a relationship with Him.

Tuesday

Sitting in the Garden or looking out of the window, we can receive great joy from the simple pleasures of flowers blooming and birds feeding. Our creator has given us a home that is full of natural wonders; the honey bee and the butterfly, lichen and frost crystals. And God has also gifted us the imagination and power to create beautiful things. We can express joy, peace, togetherness and love. We can create new relationships and communities, and even through the gift of God's creation, life itself. We can, of course, also exploit the world, ruin nature and become bound up with the negative impact of not taking care of God's world.



It is not just about what we see around us. Just as important is HOW we see it and HOW we respond to it. Last week, after the easing of Lockdown, we experienced the thrill of going to a Garden Centre and purchased a climbing rose. Romantically, we chose a deep and bright yellow – the same as my bouquet and the church decorations on our wedding day. This week, the first buds have opened – it is not as advertised on the picture. I am disappointed; the romantic reminder is no more! Annoyed, I get closer to take a picture. Checking the image, something

begins to slowly dawn on me. Forget 'all about me', find a God-centred perspective and look for the beauty. Rejoice in the glorious creation of God and our creative gifts. We shall not be digging up the rosebush and using the picture to ask for a refund. Instead we shall enjoy what is there and take care of it.

Wednesday

In current times, many in our nation are energised by a vision and a determination to bring about greater equality and justice for all. There are growing movements campaigning for Women's Rights and climate change as well as against child poverty and racism.

Jesus saw the deepest needs of the people and acted in response to them, bringing healing and peace. He did not say, 'Oh dear', or, 'I will pray for you and move on'. For us, today, feelings are not enough and even though prayer is a powerful tool, we need to act. All men and women are made in 'the image of God'; we are called to respect one another and work together for a better society. Showing God's love means standing by and working with those who are suffering because of economic, racial and gender privilege, because of forces bigger than themselves.

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.*

*O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.*

(Prayer of St Francis)

Thursday

Lots of us have found ourselves expected to keep apart or be alone in Lockdown. For many, if not all, this has been a difficult time because human beings, by their nature, are programmed largely for communal living. Whether being alone or in imposed togetherness, many of us will have experienced periods of loneliness. Loneliness can be described as not necessarily being alone but feeling that no-one cares for us or that no-one can understand us. Whether it be through family or friends, our neighbours or community, we all need to enjoy a degree of support and friendship.



The Westminster Shorter Catechism of 1647 begins with question number one: 'What is the chief end of man?' The answer given is that a man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him. By 'enjoy' it means to be aware that 'God is with us', loving us, ever merciful and faithful. In reaching out

to know him, we will find ourselves able to rejoice in our dependence upon him. God created humanity for companionship – for us to choose to be his companions and for him to be our companion. God is the ultimate companion upon whose love and mercy we can rely for the whole journey.

Friday

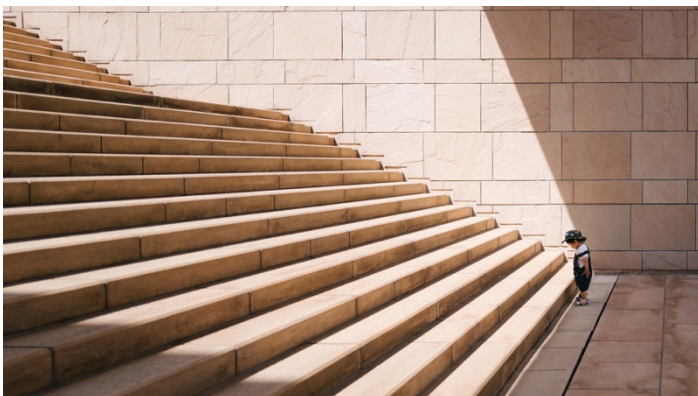
For those of us who have been able to get out, walking the local footpaths has provided some relief to the circumstances of Lockdown. We walked around Waterford and the nearby villages following well-worn paths and occasionally a connecting road. The route was well signposted and we were lucky enough to have a book of walks giving a map and description of some of the features along the way. We met a few walkers and joggers, most of whom exchanged a word about the day or gave information about the path before us that they had experienced for themselves.

It struck me that this is much like Christianity – indeed, the early Christians used the phrase ‘The Way’ whenever they talked about their Faith. We are all travelling together. Some of us are looking at the route, some stepping out for the first time, others feel like resting or are in need of an energy tablet. All of us are experiencing new, unexpected and surprising lessons along the route.



We set off on our journey of faith as individuals but in the company of others. We have our guide, called 'The Bible', which shows us how God has revealed himself in the past, especially through the earthly ministry of Jesus which provides a pathway to follow. The saints, persons of faith, mentors and Church signpost the way which has been walked for over two thousand years. We meet fellow human beings on the journey of faith and we share experiences and teach one another. There is no hierarchy, no set pace and sometimes we will find ourselves feeling confused, going round in circles or even suspect we have lost our way. However, if we trust that we are not alone but, instead, walk with the Risen Christ, we will find the way we are born to take.

Saturday



"Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase."

(Martin Luther King Jr)

When I was little, I played at being a nurse, a farmer, a Native American leading their nation and a teacher. As I progressed through the years at school, it was always going to be a win for the teacher, though, for many years, I did not understand that life was more complicated, our path can be unexpected, take many turns and that working out God's will for our lives takes a

lot of listening and waiting (unless you receive a thunderbolt or the earth moves!).

How about you? Did you get the career/role/job that you thought you would have/like/be best suited to or be good at? Maybe the dream didn't come true or you are still waiting to find out? Perhaps what you do/what you did, is not recognised financially or socially. Maybe you have less energy, are less mobile or feel of less use. Or there could be something else awaiting you - on the next step of the staircase - something you have yet to discover?

The real question is: 'What is God calling to me to do, to be, to become?' For some reading this, the answer will be an overt 'religious' vocation - ordained ministry, missionary work, youth worker, bible translator, joining a teaching or medical order. For others, it might involve volunteering, working in the community to serve health and social needs. Many of us are called to befriend, to parent in many ways as an aunt or uncle, foster carer or grandparent, or to be a good neighbour or become a carer. Our calling could be to identify and encourage others, a faithful ministry of prayer for those in need, the role of sharing a lifetime's experience with hindsight and wisdom. No matter who we are, what we have done and what is to come, we all have a part in God's plan.

A Memo to Myself

I have a vocation from God.

If I already know what it is, I pray to be faithful.

If I am still searching,

I pray to hear God's voice and to respond generously.

Amen

(National office for Vocations, RC)

Sunday

Romans 12. 4-8:



For in the same way that one body has so many different parts, each with different functions; we, too—the many—are different parts that form one body in the Anointed One. Each one of us is joined with one another,

and we become together what we could not be alone. Since our gifts vary depending on the grace poured out on each of us, it is important that we exercise the gifts we have been given. If prophecy is your gift, then speak as a prophet according to your proportion of faith. If service is your gift, then serve well. If teaching is your gift, then teach well. If you have been given a voice of encouragement, then use it often. If giving is your gift, then be generous. If leading, then be eager to get started. If sharing God's mercy, then be cheerful in sharing it.

(The Voice)

*I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin,
my hand will save.*

*I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?*

*Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.*

(Dan L. Schutte)