

27 March 2020

Build solid relationships

This is in view of trying to put into practice the famous Golden Rule, the Word of Life for the month of March 2020 "In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets." (Mt 7:12).

I think it is hard work to build solid relationships that must mean the ones that God wants us to have (so that we have Jesus in the midst in a way that we know him to be present among us). Achieving this, I for my part constantly have to be like the rag doll that St Therese of Lisieux felt herself to be. I.e. I must learn to share something of the kenosis, the emptying of Jesus and so realise more and more that what blocks me being that person who is totally docile to God's will is a lot of the old man still there in me.

Really solid relationships are built up when we are at least *trying* to be like that; and the mysterious joyful news is that *if* I am doing that then I can feel that I am my true self as a human being. I feel at a much greater peace within myself and so am able to spread that a bit more to others. There was an Italian priest in the Milan region who has this spirit that the best of the laity have:

Don Giuseppe Berardelli, 72, was the archpriest of Casnigo, a town in northern Italy about 50 miles northeast of Milan.

According to Italian news site Prima Bergamo, Berardelli died sometime between March 15 and 16 and was being treated at a hospital in nearby Lovere, as his condition worsened.

A health care worker at the hospital told the Italian online news outlet Araberara that Berardelli was given a ventilator but the priest refused it so someone who was younger than him could use it.

I also read that his parishioners loved their 72 year old priest who was always able to listen to them, and they had bought him the ventilator when he contracted the corona virus.

I have come to the conclusion that many lay people are better at this than at least I am. I thank God for the laity in the Movement and in our parishes who are like this.

This reflection is the fruit of meditating on a wonderful book on Jesus in the Midst which is the theme for the Focolare Movement for this year. It is tough to live with Jesus, and not just a palliative caring presence. He asks of us to be like him; in the past it was said that it was unlikely anyone of us would actually give our lives for others as Jesus did, but that must be the intention within. I am not sure how I would manage, but I trust in the grace of the moment as perhaps that is coming our way.

God wants us to have as perfect a joy and love as we can cope with and muster on this earth and for ever in the next. So it is heads I win, tails I win. (i.e. when you toss a coin to see which side it comes up with another, for us we always win).

I heard a lovely reflection of the Jewish tradition about God from Fr Stephen Giles mhm. When God from time to time sends us disasters onto the human family, or in any particular place, he has always beforehand provided the remedy. This covid-19 epidemic has led to “physical isolation” from one another but he sent us the modern means of communication that help us physically to feel in touch with others even if we cannot go and visit people so easily.

I was for instance so happy to hear from my friend yesterday after sending out to him on the net something else: and he is praying hard for another priest friend of mine] who is not well, and I am sure for another friend of mine, Julian Stead in his old age. We, with many others are truly united and can be for each other.

Fr Dermot who was staying with us until Tuesday last 24 March too has got back to Ireland and has shared a lot of his life’s experiences even recently, some of them quite difficult. He has found his own way of looking at it all with God’s eyes.

Onwards and upwards as the famous English saying is.

Fr. Jonathan