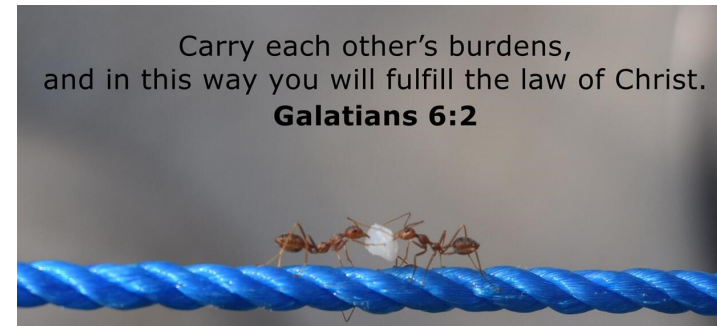


Dear Friend,

Do you sometimes feel that the news on tv, radio, computer, newspaper - or however you receive it – is so discouraging or sad that you've just decided not to pay attention to it anymore? I must admit that I came to that conclusion back last November. I used to turn on CBC Radio while I was making breakfast but I found that I was becoming so depressed by it first thing in the morning that I quit. This morning, however, as I happened to be listening later on to an interview with a person working for a charity on the ground in Uganda, I felt soundly admonished by my lack of attention! This worker said something like, "The news media usually highlight a desperate situation once or twice but then move on to a new, more interesting story. What most of these people/places need is long-term, consistent help, not a 'flash-in-the-pan'. Worse, many people simply choose to stick their heads in the sand because they feel overwhelmed or despairing: then they give no help at all!

I felt like that worker was speaking directly to me and telling me not to "cop out"! The worker was talking about donating money, explaining that a regular donation over a period of time was more helpful than a one-time "shot-in-the-arm" (- and our experiences with Covid & flu vaccines, or with donations to our own Church, would show us the same thing). I simply cannot donate to even a fraction of the "worthy causes" out there, but I suddenly realized I could do something else consistently: I COULD PRAY!!

Although I am certainly no expert on prayer, it's sometimes my experience that when I pray for someone I know, I take on some of their pain or grief - I "shoulder" some of their burden, if that doesn't sound too presumptuous. Perhaps I need to listen to the news, hard as that can be, and try to lift up at least one item in prayer - even if I have no idea what to pray for and simply pray "THY WILL BE DONE". In one of Jan Karon's Mitford Series novels, Father Tim declares that that prayer is the only one God always answers with a "Yes". It can hurt to listen to news reports, but maybe accepting that hurt can take a tiny fraction of it away from someone else. Could it be that's what Galatians 6:2 means when it says, "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ"? I guess I can 't be an ostrich anymore!



In Epiphany, every Sunday's Gospel somehow reveals Jesus as God's Son. Here are the rest of those readings, before we begin Lent:

Jan. 22	Matthew 4: 12-23
Jan. 29	Matthew 5: 1-12
Feb. 5	Matthew 5: 13-20
Feb. 12	Matthew 5: 21-37
Feb. 19 (Transfiguration)	Matthew 17: 1-9

I'd like to "book-end" this Epiphany Season with two sonnets by Malcolm Guite:

Epiphany

It might have been just someone else's story,
Some chosen people get a special king.
We leave them to their own peculiar glory,
We don't belong, it doesn't mean a thing.
But when these three arrive they bring us with them,
Gentiles like us, their wisdom might be ours;
A steady step that finds an inner rhythm,
A pilgrim's eye that sees beyond the stars.
They did not know his name but still they sought him,
They came from elsewhere but still they found;
In temples they found those who sold and bought him,
But in the filthy stable, hallowed ground.
Their courage gives our questing hearts a voice
To seek, to find, to worship, to rejoice.

Transfiguration

For that one moment, 'in and out of time',
On that one mountain where all moments meet,
The daily veil that covers the sublime
In darkling glass fell dazzled at his feet.
There were no angels full of eyes and wings
Just living glory full of truth and grace.
The Love that dances at the heart of things
Shone out upon us from a human face
And to that light the light in us leaped up,
We felt it quicken somewhere deep within,
A sudden blaze of long-extinguished hope
Trembled and tingled through the tender skin.
Nor can this blackened sky, this darkened scar
Eclipse that glimpse of how things really are.

I end with Archdeacon John Anderson's chosen Gathering Prayer for the third Sunday after Epiphany, from "Revised Common Lectionary Prayers (2002) alt.":

God of blazing light, through the power of the cross you shattered our darkness and set us free to live as your children. Give us courage and conviction, so that we may joyfully turn and follow you, led by the light that shines through Jesus Christ our Saviour.



This month, may you live in the Light! (M.C.)

With Love and Prayers
from your St. James' Parish Family



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