

Friday

Friday Reflection: The Lord is my Refuge—Lancelot Thomas

Psalm 27 (26)

Psalm 27:1 “The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear? The LORD is my life’s refuge; of whom should I be afraid?”

On this 2nd Friday of Easter, most Christian churches around the world read Psalm 27. A psalm that reminds us to place our trust in the Lord. Prof Kritzinger on Monday reminded us that the Lord is a mighty shield that protects us, and the psalm today tells us that the Lord is our refuge. In the Bible, a refuge is a place of safety and protection. Since we have such a mighty refuge, the life of a Christian should be one of bliss and tranquillity. This Psalm is a call for us to be confident that God is our protector. Yet the initial enthusiasm of the first part of the psalm shifts ever so slightly in the second half that tells us that even though we have this trust all is not perfect, all is not fine.

I think of you in the various sites as I pray for you. I know that the initial enthusiasm and love you had when you started this journey might slowly be fading. The tensions and challenges of daily life might be posing a greater strain on you than you initially expected. The affirmation of the psalmist that God is your refuge might be wearing a bit thin. Emotionally you might be in the second phase of this Psalm, waiting on the Lord and saying, “I wish I shall see the Lord in the Land of the living”. The message from the psalmist at the end of the psalm is to try and offer the reader some form of encouragement, “Wait for the Lord, have courage and be stout hearted, Wait for the Lord.”

We are in this period of waiting after Good Friday where Jesus’ trust in God seemed a bit misdirected. What if Jesus had chosen the wrong path? What if you have chosen the wrong path? Where is the peace of the refuge promised by the Psalmist?

Today in my church we celebrate one of our heroes of faith, Fidelis of Sigmaringen. Fidelis, a name which means *Faithful One*, was born in 1577 and was killed on 24th April 1622.

Fidelis had a Doctorate in Law and lectured law before being called to serve God as a Capuchin Franciscan monk. Once ordained he chose to defend the poor from the oppression of the law of his time. He became known as the lawyer of the poor.

The reason I am telling you this is that what Fidelis was most noted for was his care for all people. When the Plague broke out in Europe (similar to our Covid-19) and came to his city in Germany, he chose to care for and tend too everyone who needed him, including people radically opposed to him. This selfless service changed the hearts of many. The Theological differences that people argued about boiled down to one main question, “How much does your God allow you to create a refuge for those who are most afraid.” His actions during the plague drew so many people to his way of believing that he became a real threat to his religious opponents. He was eventually killed because the sermon of his life was just too powerful a message to allow him to be let loose. True to the founder of his order, St Francis, Fidelis had gone out to preach the Gospel without having to use word.

Taken in this context, the Psalmist might have misunderstood the idea of God as a refuge in the first part of the psalm. Often this Psalm can be a call to nationalism or religious idolatry where we hide away from the world believing we are right and our rightness will be upheld by a mighty God. But maybe, just maybe, we are being called to create a refuge for others. When others are afraid and in need of a mighty God, God might've sent you. And like Jesus, like Fedelis, this message of not my fear, but yours, not my comfort but yours, might be the most real message of the Gospel, a message that fancy Theology and large Churches do not want ordinary people to hear. Maybe, just maybe, your presence in the sites may be the presence of God to the many that are most afraid and most vulnerable at this time.

I thank you for your bravery, I thank you for your acts of being living martyrs that makes God's presence most real in the lives of so many at this time. Stay blessed, stay strong, we all need you.

Let us pray:

Lord, you have called us to follow you, not just believe in you

We know we are weak and that our human nature calls us to seek comfort and protection.

May we acknowledge this need in others and respond in love to those who need us most.

We cannot do this on our own

Now more than ever, we ask for your love and your grace that we may do your will. Amen