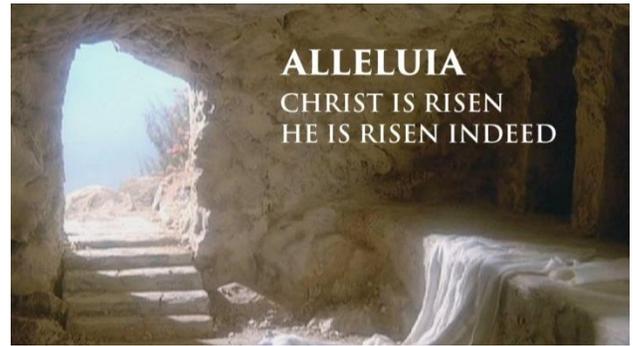


Grace Notes in Miniature

For Thursday, May 14, 2020

Dear friends:

Today we remember St Matthias, who was chosen in what we would recognise as an election after the Resurrection to replace Judas. "They cast lots..." Acts 1: 26



This will be a very short piece because I am starting late in the day. I've been doing some research on saints, and it was reiterated time and time again in the sources to which I turned that people about whom I was reading were indeed ordinary people who did extraordinary things -often many small things done with love and commitment. As I dug into material, I came across a forgotten memory of St Richard of Chichester to whom is attributed the prayer:

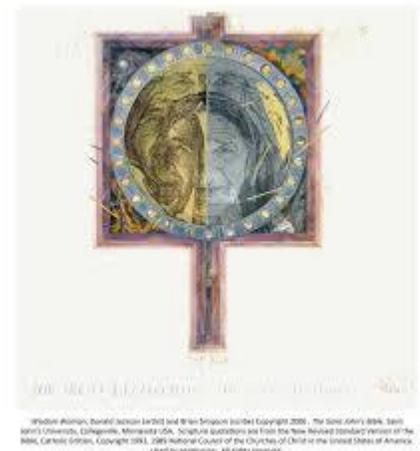


Thanks be to Thee, my Lord Jesus Christ
For all the benefits Thou hast given me,
For all the pains and insults Thou hast borne for me.
O most merciful Redeemer, friend and brother,
May I know Thee more clearly,
Love Thee more dearly,
Follow Thee more nearly.¹

Although this is a prayer, it is recognised as poetry as is the case with much spiritual writing. It led me to the musical, Godspell, which has maintained its popularity as a performance piece, particularly for Catholic schools and church groups, in spite of being fifty years old. The costumes may have changed but the tale is ever new:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ekoHxB4idmg>

What it does emphasize for us is the universality of the message, which – although it is centred on the Gospel of Matthew – is about community and relationship, anti-materialism and love. Every generation raises a challenge to its elders to the effect that "people don't think that way any more" but time and time again, the message of God's love proves to be timeless as does wisdom. (Illustration from the Saint John's Bible)



¹ <https://archive.org/stream/churchmansprayer00bulluoft#page/30/mode/2up>

Consider this passage from Proverbs 4:6-7, estimated to be written about 700 BCE:

Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you.
Wisdom is supreme; therefore, get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. (NIV)

And then from Hildegard of Bingen in the 12th Century:

Power of Wisdom, circling all things, comprehending all things, on one path, which has life.
Three wings: one soars in the height, one exudes from the earth, one soars everywhere.
Praise to you, as befits you, Wisdom.

Or these words by Chief Tecumseh:

So live your life that the fear of death can never enter your heart. Trouble no one about their religion; Respect others in their view, and demand that they respect yours. Love your life, perfect your life, beautify all things in your life.



Seek to make your life long and its purpose in the service of your people.
Prepare a noble death song for the day when you go over the great divide.
Always give a word or a sign of salute when meeting or passing a friend, Even a stranger, when in a lonely place. Show respect to all people and grovel to none.

When you arise in the morning give thanks for the food and for the joy of living. If you see no reason for giving thanks, the fault lies only in yourself.
Abuse no one and no thing, for abuse turns the wise ones to fools And robs the spirit of its vision.

When it comes your time to die, be not like those whose hearts are filled With the fear of death, so that when their time comes they weep And pray for a little more time to live their lives over again in a different way. Sing your death song and die like a hero going home.

The voices may be different, but the message has much in common. Religious historians and anthropologists will tell us that people everywhere and, in all ages, have sought many of the same things – beauty, meaning in life, comfort and assurance, food for the soul.

Poetry does not just come to us in words and I offer you today the poetry in music of this piece – Gabriel's Oboe, by Ennio Morricone – played on different instruments:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxby9BzJfEo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WJhax7Jmxs>

May the poetry and the music be food for your soul this day.

With every blessing,

Gillian