



Advent 2018

Week 1

Accompany refugees this Advent

“See, the days are coming – it is the Lord who speaks – when I am going to fulfil the promise I made to the House of Israel and the House of Judah: In those days at that time, I will make a virtuous Branch grow for David, who shall practise honesty and integrity in the land.”

Jeremiah 33:14-15

We do not hope for that which we have. We hope for that which is possible. Hope is about promise. St Paul describes hope in this way in his letter to the Romans:

“Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.”

St Paul highlights here the importance of vision to hope. Hope requires us to see things that our eyes do not allow us to. This reminds me of a story told in a book by Anthony de Mello SJ, an Indian Jesuit:

A writer arrived at the monastery to write a book about the Master. “People say you are a genius. Are you?” he asked.

“You might say so,” said the Master with a smile.

“And what makes one a genius?” asked the intrepid reporter.

“The ability to see,” said the Master.

The writer was betwixt and between. Scratching his hair with one hand and rubbing his tummy with the other, he muttered, “To see what?”

The Master quietly replied, “The butterfly in a caterpillar, the eagle in an egg, the saint in a selfish person, life in death, unity in separation, the divine in the human and the human in the divine.”

The genius of the Master is his hopeful vision, his ability to see what is currently unseen. This is what hope is; seeing what is possible, what is promised. Hope is living out of that, rather than what is given now.

How difficult this is in our society for any of us, but especially refugees and asylum seekers who arrive here in hope of a better future. So many of them have that hope dashed by the attitudes of those who want to keep foreigners out and the government reflects this by making the asylum and appeals process as difficult to navigate as possible for them, removing all support if they are refused. Each refusal or injustice becomes another blow to one’s hope. Despite this, like the Master in the story, so many have a genius quality of resilience that keeps them living in hope.

Today’s first reading at Sunday Mass lights that fire of hope within us too. It’s the waiting in patience that’s difficult. But we don’t just sit and wait. We are not passive receptors of what is promised. Our hope energises us. It motivates us and we positively work for what is promised. We exercise our desire for what is promised. We have a part to play so that what is promised will be realised.

○ Shoot of Jesse, may the hope in the hearts of homeless people, refugees and asylum seekers for what is right and just in the land be met and fulfilled by your coming.



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