

Reflection from Fr. Colm on the 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Audio posted to the Parish Website on Monday 21st September 2020

Hello everybody, hope you're okay. I'm sitting in the garden here of the presbytery it's an absolutely glorious day. Thank God we have the good sunshine to keep our spirits up, I hope. Various reports today from medical officers, scientists just warning us again about the impending second wave and very cautionary approach by them obviously because they want us to be very careful and not to be foolish by way of breaking any of the regulations the lockdown regulations imposed at the moment. However, it doesn't help our sense of security knowing that we are living with this possible COVID wave that might be upon us.

And so we take comfort, I'd like to think we take comfort from the readings this weekend especially the reassuring words of Isaiah, you know, *"My ways are not your ways,"* I think this really seems to be the, *"my thoughts are not your thoughts"* says Isaiah or as John Lennon once famously said, *"Life is what happens when you're busy making other plans."*

This transformation, that change that takes place within each one of us and, please God, it's going to be taking place in our isolation at the moment or wherever we find ourselves I hope you take comfort from the fact that we will come out of this better people. Hardship yes, challenging and difficult there's no doubt about that.

But I just came across a story last week of a young lass her name is Rebecca Lawrence, she's a consultant psychiatrist, and this week she spoke candidly about her own personal demons. It's not often we find a professional, we're listening to professionals today, but it's not often we find professionals being so transparent about their inner demons. She said her journey through life, she's only 29 I think years of age, hasn't been straightforward as she had hoped. I quote her now. *"My career actually began on the other side as a psychiatric patient going through multiple admissions, medications, and of course electroconvulsive therapy."* Rebecca got through all this, continued to pursue her career in medicine, and then from there onto study psychiatry and if ever the term "wounded healer" was applicable I would think it's very very much so with Rebecca. Her work now is in addiction psychiatry because she feared adult psychiatry might trigger painful memories for her. And one of the lovely lines from her testimony was recalling seeing a patient in

the same hospital where she was now a consultant noticing her, recognising her, and shouting out "*She's a doctor but she used to be a patient how's that?*"

That's a great question. How is it? Well, that's the mystery of life. How is it? How can we become such strong vital human beings out of our own darkness? We look for these stories of hope and I certainly found it in this young lass's life. Because with remarkable humility she speaks of the value of her own inner turmoil being the bedrock of her own ministry, her own profession. She said, "*I have been asked if being a patient has made me a better psychiatrist. It has undoubtedly influenced the way I work and think.*" and questioning if medication is a heal-all for everyone she adds "*I believe passionately that we should listen to the patients and their stories*" but she adds "*Kindness can bring solace where medication cannot.*" I think that's a lovely line "*Kindness can bring solace where medication cannot.*" And so, this openness, this strange mix of challenges and setbacks that has been a part of Rebecca's life have also been a trigger for her moving forward.

I think that's what Jesus is talking about in the Gospel today. You know, within God's presence everything is levelled, everything is equal. Let's not start using human terms to dictate to God whom He should love, how much He should love, and how much He shouldn't. You cannot measure God's love. We might think that this is a Gospel of social justice, which it is too, but it is also very much I think more profoundly a Gospel of immersing ourselves in the life of Christ which St Paul is at pains to point out in this fabulous reading from the second reading that we have today he gets to the nub of the problem and eviscerating of his own ego when after many of years of struggling with himself he can say "*Life to me, of course, is Christ I do not know what to choose. I am caught in this dilemma: I want to be gone and be with Christ*"

Nice to be back talking to you again, and I hope you're all okay and I will look forward to again when we can all team up in our houses of worship.