

Reflection from Fr. Colm on Saturday of the 4th week of Eastertide

Audio posted to the Parish Website on Saturday 9th May 2020

Good morning. Today we, and indeed these past few days, we remember those who died in the cause of freedom. Perhaps it's appropriate to remind ourselves that over five million Germans died who are non-Jewish at the hands of the evil Nazi regime. Of those some of them are very well known to us, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the evangelical pastor, Edith Stein who died in Auschwitz a Carmelite nun, she was a convert from Judaism. Alfred Delp, the Jesuit, he was hanged on the feast of the Presentation in Plötzensee Prison.

And then, for me, the most relevant, is Friedrich Reck-Malleczewen. Malleczewen wrote just his account of the Nazis and his familiarity, he was very familiar with some of the higher Reichsleitungen within the Nazi party. He describes *vividly* a restaurant on a road between Munich and Salzburg in a restaurant and Hitler walking in with his bodyguards, but the bodyguards left him to eat on his own and Malleczewen regrets not ending it all there and then because he had a revolver in his hands.

He was an extraordinary man who came from a Prussian background, aristocratic, he's one of these Old Testament type figures, railing at God for these injustices that he sees around him. And I think he's a very important person in the context of Nazi history, so much so that Hannah Ardent the Jewish philosopher considered him and his testimony one of the most important.

In the Acts of the Apostles this morning we hear about this persuasion that's launched against Paul and Barnabas by the local Jewish community and they use very interesting words *"But the Jews worked upon some of the devout women of the upper classes and the leading men of the city and persuaded them to turn against Paul and Barnabas and expel them from their territory."* A clear reminder to us of the power of persuasion against goodness when that charismatic or influential voice comes it can be quite difficult to resist.

However, just one or two quotations from Malleczewen which I think are relevant not just to then but to now. *"Nationalism,"* he says is , *"a state*

of mind in which you do not love your own country as much as you hate somebody else's" and "You, up there: I hate you waking and sleeping. I will hate and curse you in the hour of my death. I will hate and curse you from my grave, and it will be your children and your children's children who will have to bear my curse. I have no other weapon against you but this curse, I know that it withers the hearts of him who utters it, I do not know if I will survive your downfall. But this I know that a man must hate this Germany with all his heart if he really loves it. I would ten times rather die than to see you triumph."

He died; he was executed in Dachau. One of the very fine Germans who died at the hands of this very real evil that was among us then. God bless.