

Donnybrook

26 December 2021

Welcome

The opening words of the Wexford Carol may speak to us today:

Good people all, this Christmastide,
Consider well and bear in mind
What our good God for us has done
In sending his beloved Son.

Topic

After the rush of Christmas and the day itself, we have time in the next while to consider well. What shall we consider?

Steps

For all of us, the quality of our relationships is the most life-giving, the most challenging and the most joyful dimension of our lives, as we know. The pandemic has led to a kind of sifting or shaking down of the important and enduring loves and friendships. Some people in our lives have become somewhat more remote, while others have been drawn closer. It may well be that the people who really matter are now fewer but the relationships are more alive. Of course, it would not be quite right to let the current difficulties, a bug in reality, dictate our relationships, so perhaps it is time to stand back and take stock. Is how my loves have evolved the way I want them to be? Should I choose to invest more creatively in certain relationships? How can I be a spouse, parent, sibling, friend, so that I may be a blessing to those who meet me? This is certainly something we can consider well.

The key relationships have a greater depth than we might usually permit ourselves to imagine. They are not just life-giving and life-affirming in themselves, but also intimations of the love of God. You could go a step further. In fact, they are already participations in the love of God. In the letter of St John, the writer speaks plainly and directly

God is love,
and those who abide in love abide in God,
and God abides in them. (1 John 4:16 NRSV)

If I may add, whether you like or not!!! Our first reading offers an invitation to consider well:

Think of the love the father has lavished upon
by letting us be called God's children
and that is what we are.

We don't believe in a God who might be out there somewhere; we believe in God who is love and who loves each one of us with a unique love. That is also something that we can consider well.

Conclusion

Finally, the story of Christmas has inspired musicians, poets and artists. I would like to end with one of my favourite poems. The poet is ruminating playfully on the Christmas stories:

We listen to the story again:
An exotic visitor
Comes to a country girl
In a mountain town
And nine months afterwards
God's wisdom is a
footling child.

Shepherds arrive to the place,
Summoned by music;
And scholars from some
distant part,
Tracking a light.

But why did not the sun,
for awe,
Lose its footing in the sky?
Why did seas not charge
across the astonished land?
Why did every horse in every
paddock everywhere
Not break into delirious
chase?
By what foul means were
linnets stilled?

And how can we,
Loving so little,
Fettered by knowledge,
Believe in such
excessive love?

Here is also something we can consider well and bear in mind.