

On being a nuisance

A friend of mine has a dog on which he dotes – and which, he also admits, over-indulges. The dog needs exercise, but unfortunately, my friend does not have a house with a yard and, in addition, his job has taken him away a lot in the past and so he has been unable to walk his dog regularly. In the last week, however, there has been a new addition to the house – a cute little puppy, named Kingsley. He is knee-high to nothing, but full of life and vigour - eager to get to know his new world, including the chubby older dog with which he shares the house. He acts like a little ninja fighter, challenging the older dog, jumping up at her and playfully attacking her rear legs, which makes her jump and leap out of reach of those tiny teeth. The calm and peaceful world of the older dog has been shattered, but as I sat watching little Kingsley hassle the older dog, I realised that, nuisance as he is, he is also probably going to be her salvation, for in having to counter his constant playful attacks, is giving her the exercise that she so obviously needs.

I am writing this on the Feast of the Sacred Heart, which speaks of the “the bottom line” in the Christian faith, namely that God loves us - fully, completely and in a human way. As I sat saying my Office this morning, I was drawn to a line in the hymn of Morning Prayer: “We are the Father’s gift to Christ”. “Not much of a gift”, I murmured, thinking about the troubles that I and the rest of the human race cause the Lord. But then, the thought also came that we become loving people by caring for people in all the “ups and downs” of their lives – and the same is true of Christ. I think there is a tendency to understand the Incarnation in terms of a “Visitation” of God, but a richer way to understand it may be to view it as the “Translation” of God into the human language of our lives. The whole of Christ’s life, and not just his birth, is the Incarnation – completed as on the cross he whispers, “It is completed”. But in another sense, the Incarnation is still going on, for the messiness of my living and the troubles I cause the Lord, stretches the heart of Christ still further, as he cares for me “in season and out of season”. In this way, the Incarnation is becoming richer with each moment that I need Christ’s presence, with my every need, the love of God for me becomes more encompassing – and in that way, I – we – are the gift the Father gives to Christ. Through me being a “Kingsley”, God’s love is becoming more richly present in the world, in Christ.

Last Thursday, I borrowed a friend’s car to go to Church for the Thursday Mass and drop-session. As I was driving along, a car suddenly pulled out from the side of the road without signalling and I had to break sharply. As I did so, there was a crash and a thud, for a motor-cyclist had driven into the back of the car. I stopped the car and got out and went back to the motor-cyclist. The front of her motorbike was smashed and she was very shocked and confused, but, fortunately, apart from that she was unhurt. So, I went back to my car and all I could see were a few dents and scratches on the paintwork, so I said to the woman, who had come to see what damage she had caused, that she should not worry - I was just glad she was unhurt. She was very relieved and I then drove off. However, when I got the car home later and looked at it more closely with my friend, whose car it is, I saw that the damage she had caused was much more serious than I thought. The hatch door will now not close properly and the bodywork below the door will have to be replaced, because the impact broke it off from its screws.

My friend has just informed me that the repairs will cost nearly Rp 3 million, which is about 200 pounds sterling. Do I regret letting the woman off so lightly? No! She was obviously distressed enough about her bike and that she had crashed. And even I need my Kingsley now and then!

Diary

You may remember that I spoke to you of the Catholic Orphanage, here in Bali, at a place called Palasari, and of a little boy called Daniel, who held on to my hand each time I visited there. Well, there is another chapter in that story. One of the Parishioners, at the Sunday Evening Mass, became interested in the Orphanage through my talking about it at Mass and he has taken to visiting it and becoming a major benefactor. He has two adopted sons, apart from his own grown up children, and he spoke to me a little while ago about the possibility of adopting a third son. About three weeks ago, he suddenly told me, while we were having a meal together, that he had signed all the papers and now Daniel was his adopted son. I was astonished, but very pleased for Daniel, for he is now a member of a kind and loving family. However, as my friend was telling me this, there was another feeling deep inside me, which I pushed down until I could look at it later. When I did so, after going home and sitting down by myself, I realised that the feeling was a slight one of envy!

I saw Daniel at Mass last Sunday evening, sitting next to his new Father. I did not notice him at first, but when I did, I gave him a big smile and welcomed him. He smiled at me, but shyly snuggled into the arm of his new Father and I was pleased that he had so taken to him. I think that there also might have been a slight pang, that I was not so special any more – but then after Mass, as I was saying goodbye to the people, Daniel walked up the aisle by himself to shake hands with me and then stayed holding my finger for a while as I said goodbye to the others.

God bless,

Terry