

## Grasp the moment

I was driving past the prison this morning and my thoughts went out to those on the other side of the wall, with whom I pray on Tuesdays. I found myself thinking, “What wasted lives!” And this thought was directed especially towards the young people of “the Bali Nine”, who will probably never get out, unless it be to be taken to a place of execution. I, then, began to think of my chats with them and others in prison, whom I know, both here and in England and I realised that, despite their confinement and the restrictions on their lives, they are living and in some ways are now living more intensely than they have ever done. Where my thinking had gone wrong, in thinking their lives were being wasted, was in mixing up “living” with “how we live”.

I am not disparaging the value of the wonderfully creative ways of living, which can make our living such a rich experience, but it is not our situation, which can make a waste of our lives, but only our lack of a decision to live and make a difference in our world – and that it true whatever our situation. I am reminded of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German Lutheran Pastor, who opposed Hitler during the Second World War and was imprisoned, tortured and eventually executed for doing so. I cannot remember his exact words, but he said to his captors and executioners something like, “You can take away my freedom, but not my freedom to be. I am free and choose not to hate you”. Even as they put the wire round his neck, with which they killed him, Bonhoeffer was free; Bonhoeffer lived.

A few weeks ago, I was reading St Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, *“For this is what I received from the Lord, and in turn passed on to you: that on the same night that he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread and thanked God for it and broke it, and he said, ‘This is my body...’”* (11:24). In other accounts of the Last Supper, it just says that the Lord “gave thanks”, but not what he gave thanks for. I was struck by the fact that when the Lord gave thanks, it was for the bread and in so doing it became the Eucharist – and that which the whole cosmos cannot contain became fully present in that tiny piece of bread. It does not take a full meal, nor a rich variety of dishes in order to meet God at Mass, it takes only a small piece of bread. In the same way, it does not take a wealth of opportunities in order to truly live the Mass of our lives, it takes only that we grasp the moment and give thanks for it.

On rare occasions, I get an attack of the “if onlys”. “If only I had enough time”, “If only if I had enough talent” – and nowadays, more and more: “If only I had enough energy”. These attacks, of course, are fantasies. I am looking at what is not possible, and in so doing, am usually overlooking what is possible. The Scripture says, “Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ” – unless, of course, my regrets for what cannot be, blind me to what can be. The love of Christ is met with in my living – and nothing can stop me from living. Bonhoeffer and my friends in prison teach me that.

### Diary

I had dinner with the Bishop and the Papal Nuncio two nights ago – I love dropping names! – and in the process I had my future here more or less settled. I had met the Nuncio before and talked with him about starting an English speaking Chaplaincy here in Bali and he was enthusiastic about the project, but the Bishop had not yet got round to writing to Mill Hill, the Headquarters of my Society, requesting them to appoint me to this diocese. The Nuncio, however, did not appear to know this for he introduced me to his companions as “the English speaking Chaplain in Bali” and throughout the meal spoke with me several times about the progress of the work, saying how important it was. At the end of the meal, as the Bishop was leaving, he said to me that he had forgotten to write, but would do so

when he returned from the Holy Land, which he was leaving for the next day.  
Coincidence?

The house I am moving into when I come back from Sarawak, where I go to teach in September and October, has a few bits of furniture, but nothing else. So, I have to begin buying things: crockery, linens, cutlery, beds etc. I had to do the same when I moved into Reading and I haunted the second hand furniture shops there, but here I have to rely on the advice and help of my friends of what and where to buy – and especially about the price. One friend, in particular, is being very helpful taking me round and advising me, but it is still psychically tiring having to make all these choices, more so that I remember when I was in Reading. But then I was eleven years younger and that probably makes a difference.

God bless,

Terry