Gathering the pieces

As I told you last week, I sacked my architect/builder and cancelled the contract with him, for I no longer believed that he was able to carry out the renovations to my house. I had discovered that he never wrote anything down, so many things I had told I wanted, had not been done or he had changed to something else, without consulting me; the wood he had used for doors and windows was inferior, warped and split; and, most annoying of all, when I made appointments with him, he failed to turn up, again and again and again, and when I then texted him or phoned to ask why, he would not answer. As you may be able to tell - I had had enough!

But, at the same time, I like him. He is a pleasant, simple man and, on the occasions I have sat down and talked with him, he has been very helpful and friendly. I can only assume that the task was beyond him and he was too shy to admit it and, because of this, I decided that I would end the contract on as friendly a note as possible. So, I wrote an official letter stating that I was ending the contract on the grounds that completion was already a month and a half overdue. I wrote that, as he was now liable to pay for my lodgings at $30 per day and completion would take at least another month, it was to both our benefit that we end the contract now. I told him I had a new architect from the Church who would now take over operations and a meeting was arranged with the new man so that there could be an orderly hand-over.

I felt happy with myself, because I had avoided hurting him by not referring to the real reasons for my cancelling the contract, namely inferior workmanship. Indeed, I suspect I was feeling more than happy - I was feeling rather self-satisfied – and so much so that when I was going to write my blog last week, I was going to give a reflection on it. I was going to say that, although truth and justice may be on our side, we need always to temper it with mercy and goodness. The words of Shakespeare were ringing in my ears:

> “The quality of mercy is not strained,
> It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath,
> It is twice blest: it blesseth him that gives and him that takes.”
>
> *The Merchant of Venice*

However, he did not turn up for the meeting with the new architect and, furthermore, the new man told me that when he had finally managed to contact him by phone, he obviously thought that I had merely cancelled the contract, but that he was still responsible for the work and would not listen to any other explanation from the new architect. So, I had to write again - telling him to stop all work immediately and giving the real reasons: the work he had done was shoddy and of an inferior quality as well as being well overdue. So here I am - sitting, with the bits of this affair in splinters all around me: “I like the man and don’t want to hurt him”, “The work he has done is of inferior quality”, “No one should be ‘put down’”, “His lack of courtesy in refusing to reply to calls is just not acceptable”, “He is a young Catholic with a young family and needs support”, “I want my home; I don’t want to live in lodgings anymore.” How can I reconcile all these opposing feelings?

I was listening to a play on the radio yesterday. A young black slave was speaking about the girl he loved, “She gathers together the bits of me”, he said, “and puts them in the right order”. It’s true, only a lover can do that; we cannot do it for ourselves. We need someone who can see us from without and also from within and so knows where those pieces go.

Gathering the pieces

The Bible teaches – not just that God speaks through the lives recorded in the Bible – but that he also sometimes speaks through the lives hat are lived all around us – and that includes plays on the radio. I think I heard the Lord speaking through those words on the radio yesterday. Now I have to find the way to let him gather all these pieces that lie splintered around me - because it is all beyond me.

Diary

My brother, Bern, sister-in-law, Mary and my ex-housekeeper, Josie, left for home last Monday. I enjoyed their being with me and I also realise that it was the longest time I had spent with my brother for many years and it has brought us much closer together. Being with him, I realised that many of the things I had thought of as merely problems of “middle-age”, are, in fact, family traits. I get prolonged sneezing fits, so does my brother. I, on rare occasions, get food blockages when eating, so does my brother. It am realising that we are much more “family” than we are individuals - and not just on the physical level either.

My last remaining Aunt, Norah, who was also my Godmother, died this week. She also had a great sense of being family and referred to herself as *“the last of the Burkes”*, meaning, of course, her generation, not the family lineage. Her death brings with it the thought that my generation is now the next in line to die - bar a tragic happening. Does this frighten me? I don’t think so, but it does give pause for thought: What would I like to be remembered for when I die? My mind turns to a poem I once read: “To know that I am beloved upon the earth”.

Next week begins an International Conference on global warming, here in Bali, and the Parish Priest asked me to preach on it at the Sunday evening English Mass. In a foolish moment, I mentioned that I teach environmental ethics and the following week I was asked by the Parish Priest to give a talk on global warming after Mass. I asked him how long it was to be, “15 minutes?” I asked. “One hour”, he answered! I have tried to discover, whom, I will be talking to – parishioners or others – but the answers I am getting are rather vague. So, I have decided to use an Indonesian interpreter and make up a power-point presentation – provided I can find suitable pictures and charts. I want a chart of how *“photosynthesis”* works, I would also like a chart to show how much of Indonesia would be left if the ice-caps melt. Also any other picture or chart that would be helpful in a basic presentation. Can you help, please?

BICC News

Our Christmas Campaign - Christmas CDs on sale

This Sunday begins our Christmas Campaign to bring a little charity and cheer to some of those we tend to overlook during the rest of the year – particularly the orphans and elderly. The BICC choir have produced a very good CD of Christmas carols and songs and this will be on sale after Mass for Rp 35,000. Please help push it.

You are also welcome to give a donation to this campaign.

Gathering the pieces

Thursday Evening Meditation Mass

This is at 6.30pm, in the upstairs Chapel at Betania. It is a very gentle and prayerful Mass, aimed at helping people to listen to God through the Scriptures. Please feel free to come and see whether it suits you.

Drop-in Session

If you would like to talk with me privately or go to confession, I will be at SFX Church each Thursday between 5pm and 6pm. I will be in the Adoration Chapel behind the main altar. You enter by the door on the right of the sacristy. Come in and wave a finger at me - I will be praying there - and I will come out so we can chat.

"Fellowship" – coffee/tea and chat - after Mass

The aim of BICC is to draw into friendship those of the parish, and also visitors, especially those who do not speak Indonesian. A great help would be, if we were able to offering some simple refreshment after Mass such as coffee, tea or soft drink. However, we need helpers for this. Anyone?

Bible Study/discussion group

I will be starting this again soon, but I have some questions:

- It has been at 6.00pm on Tuesdays, but is 6.30pm or 7pm a better time?
- We have been studying the Bible, but would you like it to be wider?

Our envelope offering

During November, we collected:

4th Nov.	Rp. 2,090,000
11th Nov.	Rp 1,470,000
18th Nov	Rp 3,842,000
25th Nov	Rp 1,506,000

Total for November: Rp 8,908,000

Thank you very much for your generous support.

God bless,

Terry