

## **Unless the Lord builds the house...**

In the on-going saga of my house, I told how I was unable to buy more bathroom tiles, to replace those, which had been damaged and it looked like I would have to strip off all the tiles and begin again. Well, that happened and so I went to choose other tiles and managed to find a better colour scheme than the one previously. However, before I went, I asked the workmen to measure the bathroom to ensure that I would buy sufficient tiles this time; this they did and told me the area that needed to be covered. However, a few days after having bought the new tiles, I went to the house and saw a bare space in the middle of the bathroom wall and discovered that the workmen had miscalculated – we were five tiles short. So, I told the foreman, where I had bought the tiles and asked him to buy extra - and he answered that he had already tried, but the shop had run out of stock.

Later that day, I sat despondently and told the Lord that I was out of my depth and I did not know what to do anymore. “Do I have to strip it again?” I asked, and then humbly handed the problem over to him. I usually wake up once or twice during the night and during one of these times, on that night, I found myself remembering the tile display board, where I had first seen the new tiles – and I also remembered that there were five of “my” tiles on display there. So, the next morning, I went to the shop and asked to buy the display tiles, but the assistant said they were not for sale. I, then, explained why I needed them and asked to see the manager; the assistant went away, to return a little while later to tell me that I could buy the tiles – and they were just enough to fill the offending gap on the bathroom wall. I was jubilant!

The next day, sitting in dentist’s chair, I related my story about the extra tiles to my dentist, a Catholic, and, while he worked on me, he told me that at one time he would never have believed that God could be interested in such small things in our lives, but that he had recently joined a prayer community and was now learning to look for the Lord’s hand also in the small things of life and, by so doing, was discovering a wonderful sense of the nearness and care of God. As I listened to him, I recognised that trust in God’s care for us that I also have been discovering, but I could also see that, from the outside, this could well look like magic – using God to get the things you want. However, the inner reality of what we were talking about is completely different.

When I was driving to the tile shop, I was not begging the Lord to let me buy those tiles. I was giving the matter into his hands - if the tiles were not available, then he and I would try something else, because I have come to know that with the Lord by my side I can face up to any situation, no matter how difficult. I have learnt – or rather, am still learning – that I am in a partnership and have a partner I can trust, so I was asking not that my will be done, but that his will be done, for I have also learnt that he knows about these things far better than I do.

This experience of partnership, or “fellowship in living”, is what is meant by the “New Covenant”. It is an invitation to learn to work with God and so also with others; an invitation to enter into friendship; an invitation to salvation, for the word “salvation” actually means “to live and to live richly and fully”. When we accept this invitation, we no longer live alone; we with live with others, we live with God. It was some years ago, when on retreat, that I first heard this invitation to live in partnership with the Lord, but at that time I was not able to understand what it

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meant. I was still in the mind-set of spirituality being self-perfection and so the words from the Lord sounded like an invitation to give up, to hand in the towel and become a lackey – having to ask for every little thing. It was to take many years and many tears - the result of trying to go it alone - before I came to realise that what I was being offered was not servitude, but a close, intimate friendship, in which I would share with God as he shares with me. I had to learn that it is not a lack of manhood to recognise my own limits, but rather the reverse. I had to learn that the Lord treats me as a close and intimate friend, trusting me with things he could not do alone and this led me to lean on him for support in those things which were beyond me. Thus, I am coming to know that he is intimately concerned with me and all the things that occupy me – including that gaping hole of missing tiles, which he so kindly helped me fill.

### **Diary**

Last Thursday, I said Mass for a young woman, whose baby died shortly after birth. The death was made more traumatic for her, because her husband is a Muslim and his family were insisting that the baby be buried as a Muslim, whereas she wanted him buried as a Catholic. At such times you see and sympathise with the tensions that can take place in cross-religion families. However, it can work when there is great empathy with each other's religious sensitivities – and I was impressed by her husband, who came to be at Mass with her.

I have moved again. I had been staying with a family of friends for nearly two months and they made me feel wonderfully welcome. They went away on holiday for four weeks and I was so embarrassed by the thought that I would still be there when they came back that when a friend invited me to stay with him, I accepted. This second friend has already been storing a lot of my effects – so in my room I am surrounded by my crockery, household accessories, pictures etc and should make me feel very much at home – except that they are all in boxes and plastic bags! This whole experience, however, has shown me how wonderfully kind people are.

### **BICC News**

Father Hady has asked me whether we want the Easter services in the main Church this year. However, if we did so then we would have to hold them at awkward times, so as not to interfere with the Bahasa services, so I asked if we could hold them across the road in Betania, as we did last year. That way we can keep to the traditional times of 8pm for Holy Thursday, 3pm Good Friday and 8pm for the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday. Last year, the services in Betania were very personal and intimate because we were only a few people – 70 at the most. I think that we may have a few more people this year, but I still think it was the right choice – even though if we have a lot more people we will not be able to use the air-con room.

### **Ash Wednesday and Lent**

Ash Wednesday is next week, 6<sup>th</sup> February and Mass in SFX will be at 6am and 6pm and ashes will be given out at both Masses. The Masses will be in Bahasa Indonesia.

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Ash Wednesday is a day of fast and abstinence, but it is also Chinese New Year so there is a clash. In situations like these, the coming together for a family meal takes priority over the fast. So, I hope those of you who will be celebrating Chinese New Year will enjoy the Feast.

You may wish to transfer the Fast to another day, because it is an important tradition. In East Malaysia, I am told, Chinese Catholics have been invited to fast on the day before, Tuesday, and then receive the ashes as well as celebrate with their families on the Wednesday.

*To all of you who are celebrating Chinese New Year – Gong xi fatt choi!*

### Confessions for Lent

I am available for confession every Sunday from 5pm to 6pm before Mass. If you wish to go to confession, please come a little early, so that we do not have to rush.

### Lenten House Masses

No one has asked for one yet, so the calendar is wide open – or, if you prefer, we can just have a shared Bible session.

### Bible Study/ Discussion Group

This is held on Tuesdays at 6.15pm in the committee room under the Church.

### Thursday Meditation Mass

This is held on Thursdays at 6.30pm in the upstairs chapel in Betania Parish Centre – at the back of the Church.

### BICC Choir

Our BICC musicians are leaving us and we have no one else. If you play an instrument – or know someone who might help – please email me and I will pass it on.

### Envelope Collections for January

06.01.08	Rp. 3,458,000
13.01.08	Rp. 2,163,000
20.01.08	Rp. 1,945,000
27.01.08	Rp. 2,794,000
<b>Total:</b>	<b>Rp. 10,360,000</b>

Thank you very much for your very generous support. I appreciate it.

God bless,

Terry