

THE VISION STILL HAS TIME

The vision still has its time,
presses on to fulfillment,
and will not disappoint;
if it delays, wait for it,
it will surely come,
it will not be late.

—Habakkuk 2:2-3

Living our faith in a time of chaos

REFLECTIONS BY
MARK O'CONNOR FMS

marist
ASSOCIATION OF
ST MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT

A VISION OF THE HOLY AND THE HUMAN

Winter can be a difficult season to cope with. Amidst all the cold and the wind, we can easily get a little dispirited and wonder whether the sun will ever shine again!

At such times, it's good to enter within our souls and remember the Lord is within each of us—closer to us than we are to ourselves.

For if we cannot rediscover our 'interior mansion', as St Teresa of Ávila would say, then all our efforts at living the Gospel will be superficial. Worse, our witness will be hollow.

That is why I like the poetry of the late Swedish writer and psychologist Tomas Tranströmer (winner of the 2011 Nobel Prize for Literature). Tranströmer was a mystical observer of the sacred in the ordinary; someone who, although felled by a stroke in his later decades and unable to speak, kept on communicating, even in the 'winter' of his life.

I especially love his poem *Romanesque Arches* because it captures something of how we Christians must reach out to others.

For it is from the depths of our inner humanity that we must witness, like Jesus, to the coming of the Reign of God. A few of his lines suggest a way forward: 'Don't be ashamed to be a human being, be proud!'

A fundamental principle of the spiritual life is to accept one's wounded humanity graciously. To forgo self-hatred, and the opposite extreme position of grandiosity and narcissistic delusions about one's self, is (in Ignatian terms) to accept one's creaturehood.

Certainly, no spreading of the Gospel can take place if the 'evangeliser' does not join the human race! And it is surprising how many people do not and prefer to play at being 'god'!

We must never forget that we are disciples of an incarnate God. Consider the gaze of Mary on the tiny face of the infant Jesus. As the poet Francis Webb put it: 'The tiny, not the immense, will

teach our groping eyes.' Our God became one of us! That is our ultimate boast.


'You'll never be complete, and that's as it should be.' Catholic doctrine and dogma do not 'exhaust' the gracious mystery of the Trinity. They are merely a 'window' into the heart of God. We should not mistake the window's 'frame' for the reality.

The majesty of the Catholic vision is that it opens us up to a gracious mystery beyond our wildest dreams. Fundamentalists may think they have the 'answer'. Marists, however, 'take off their shoes' because, like Moses, they know they are always in the presence of this awesome Mystery.

The Angel—the signal of the transcendent—whispered to Mary in the Annunciation a message of joy. Tranströmer imagines an angel whispering to each of us in the silence of our hearts: 'Inside you one vault after another opens endlessly.'

These then are some of our hopes on the journey of faith: to live a greater interiority and spirit of contemplation; to rejoice in our fragile humanity as the greatest gift of a God who was not ashamed to become one of us; to rejoice in our incompleteness as a way towards truth and to let grace open up the hidden 'vaults' of our spirits.

Even in the dark of winter, may we never forget Meister Eckhart's gem of wisdom: 'God is at home. It is we who have gone for a walk.'



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