

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 HEART

*We are all called
to convert from
a 'heart of stone'
and replace it with
a 'heart of flesh'
and mercy*

It is reported that St Francis de Sales, on meeting people in Geneva, would ask them: 'How is your heart?' That's not a bad question to gently ask ourselves and each other, as we examine our consciences.

For after all, the real spiritual problems of most of us are rarely 'intellectual' or even 'theological'. They are rooted much deeper—in the 'heart'.

That is why St John Chrysostom tells us: 'Find the key to your heart; you will see this key will also open the door of the Kingdom.'

Sadly, one does still come across those who act as if they believe the opposite. They are already 'in' and they seem to want to close the doors and keep the 'others' out. Effectively they want to throw away the 'key'! It's bad enough when this happens in our wider society and the 'stranger'—often in the person of the refugee in peril—is excluded.

It's worse when it occurs amongst the followers of Jesus. It's a real scandal—that a significant number of people within our church, feel alienated and cut off from the mercy of God.

I shudder to think of how many have 'left' the church, because of the meanness, rigorism or other failures coming from a minority of those who are officially 'representatives' of the Church.

Maybe, the reverse is true: we the 'Church' have sometimes (and grumpily) abandoned and left the people! Thankfully, the People of God is also blessed with many healing pastors, lay people and religious—everywhere spreading the Good News. They deserve more praise and support.

It's very simple. Pope Francis is encouraging us to 'take heart'—to repent, confess our failures honestly and re-focus on the Gospel of Mercy.

We are all called to convert from a 'heart of stone' and replace it with a 'heart of flesh' and mercy. The merciful Father—whom Jesus of Nazareth called his Abba—unlocks our hearts and graces us to discover the Kingdom coming in the ordinary lives of so many good people all around us.

That is the 'key' which unlocks the 'door of the Kingdom'. Try it... that 'key' unlocks a lot of problems...



PONDER THE WORD OF GOD

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

—Matthew 11:28–29


REFLECT

- ‘The spiritual tussle goes on in every life, between a heart of stone and a heart of flesh.’ We are daily bombarded with images and events calling for our merciful response.
- As the people of a tender and compassionate God, how can we manage this challenge in practical ways?
- Who are the witnesses of ‘real mercy in action’ in your parish community? Are there ways the good news of their efforts could be shared to inspire others? What might you do to facilitate this?

- Reflect on the past week—the normal comings and goings of your life. Can you identify times you have allowed the mercy of God to pass through you to others? If so, when? If not, focus on this in the week ahead.

PRAY TOGETHER

Jesus, when you had nothing else to give you gave yourself. And as your friends shared and ate, they were confused and complicit, just like all of us. May we give—our lives and confusions; our hollowness and our hearts—because when we give like this, we are like you, who became like us. Amen.



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