



Advent 2020: Week 4

Consoling with the Prince of Peace



*"Se ognuno fa qualcosa,
allora si può fare molto"*

"If everyone does something,
then we can do a lot"

[Fr. Puglisi]

From Luigi Gioia's talk:

When Fr Puglisi died, everything he had tried to build would have ended with him. Instead, he understood that advocacy, means 'giving a voice', that is helping everyone to find their own voice, teaching them to make themselves heard, understand their rights, express their views...

Anyone who has had the 'comfort' of a stable environments, in terms of family, country, education and financial advantage, the privilege of receiving an education, of learning how to write and speak, form an opinion and present a case will never fully understand the sense of powerlessness felt by people who drop out of school at 10, can barely read, grow in abusive households, are denied opportunities because they do not fit in, learn from a very young age that the only way to earn recognition is by siding with the people who can teach you how to be feared by others, and offer you protection, whatever the cost.

Most of us have had "paracletes", people who have been our "advocates" not only by shielding us, but especially by affirming us at the pivotal junctions in our life so that we could find our own voice, advocate for ourselves, for our lives and rights, for the causes in which we believe...

Advent is the time to acknowledge the way in which we have been comforted, affirmed, advocated for in our lives and be grateful for this, joining in Isaiah's thanksgiving: " I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels" (Is 61.10). In the wake of this recognition, we should then look for the ways in which we, in our turn, can become the paracletes, the comforters, the advocates of our sisters and brothers –



not only by being their voices, but by helping them find their voices in the difficult situations of their lives...

Consolation means advocacy. This requires us to acknowledge the gifts we have received, be joyful and grateful for them, and ask ourselves how we can use them to “repair ruined cities”, improve broken or threatened lives. It does not take much. We only have to listen to people without judgement, provide them information and guidance according to our expertise, teach them to explore their options, affirm them in their decisions, help them to articulate their needs, be there for them.

The God of Consolation

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of all mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our afflictions, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. [2 Corinthians 1.3-4]

How has God consoled you? Ask God to draw back into your mind moments when you experienced God’s consolation. Often this is associated with particular people, places and times.

You may find it helpful to draw or plot the story of God’s consolation in your life. On one axis plot your years [some of us might need a larger piece of paper!]. On the other write a word or phrase that expresses your experience of consolation. Some of these may be associated with particular people, or places or times. A simple drawing may capture that experience more than a word or phrase.

Be creative. Perhaps your timeline might be a river or a path, meandering through a changing landscape. Perhaps, rather than plot a timeline you might create a collage of pictures, names, photos, places associated with experiences of consolation.

As you reflect on your experience of receiving God’s consolation, what is the particular message of hope that you have to share with others?

In what area of your life do you need God’s gift of consolation at this time?

Doing something

“If everyone does something, then we can do a lot” [Fr. Puglisi]

Each day this week ask God to guide you to one action that expresses the consolation of God. It might be as simple as saying hello to a neighbour, baking some biscuits for another family or phoning a friend.

Celebrating Christmas

The limitations placed upon us by a virus and the loss of familiar patterns of how we have marked Christmas in the past, allow us to see the birth of Christ in its simplicity. Just as with



Advent, Christmas is a season – a time to ponder a new life beginning in a moment of time that continues to recreate each moment, each life.

In the *Spiritual Exercises* Ignatius Loyola invites us to imagine the journey Mary and Joseph made from Nazareth to Bethlehem – to picture the landscape they journeyed through; to see through their eyes and feel as they might have felt. In these last days of Advent, let your imagination lead you into accompanying them. Here are two small, human beings, drawn together in love for another, facing a future they cannot know, pondering experiences they cannot make sense of. Walk the road with them. And the end of the day's journeying, sit down with them to eat, and to talk about what has been and what is to come. Let them journey with you along your road, listening to your experiences, your fears and your hopes.

Some Bible passages to pray with and reflect on: Isaiah 61. 1-4 / Isaiah 61.10-11 / Luke 2.1-17 / Isaiah 9.1-7 / Isaiah 62