

Lent 5B – 2021

The Christian Life Is Lived Daily

Remember Gracie Allen, who played the scatterbrained wife in a comedy team with her husband George Burns? Once, Gracie called in a repairman to fix her electric clock. The repairman fiddled with it for a while and then said, "There's nothing wrong with the clock; you didn't have it plugged in." Gracie replied, "I don't want to waste electricity, so I only plug it in when I want to know what time it is." That's an apt description of many of us. We save our religion for a rainy day. We go about unplugged and wonder why our lives are so devoid of power. How sad. Christian faith is not something to be plugged in when it is convenient or when it is necessary. The Christian life is lived daily. There is a cost involved. (by King Duncan from *Collected Sermons*, www.Sermons.com)

What Weather for the Seed?

Some of you remember back to the 1940's and 1950's. As World War II ended, America went through a period of time which many remember as 'glory days' for the church. Everywhere new churches were being built, others added on to. Church attendance soared, all across the land and American Christians enjoyed an unprecedented season of religious vitality. Those who chronicle such times in public life, say that as America moved beyond the aftermath of war, some of the so called 'foxhole' conversions wore off...when the crisis was over and the world returned to normal, America again lost her religious vitality. While I think that America's trends in religious vitality or decline have many more complex factors than that..... I do wonder is it true that those who turn to God in crisis tend to forget God when the sun shines bright and the weather is fair? (by Deborah A. Koontz from *Glory Days*)

The Grain of Wheat Must Die:

In New Zealand there are more flightless birds than anywhere on earth. Among them are the kiwi and the penguin. Scientists tell us that these birds had wings but lost them. They had no use for them. They had no natural predators on those beautiful islands, and food was plentiful. Since there was no reason to fly they didn't. Through neglect they lost their wings. Compare them to the eaglet that somehow ended up in a chicken barnyard. The eaglet was raised with the chickens, pecking at corn, and strutting around the

chicken coop. One day a mountain man, passing by, recognized the bird, now a fully grown eagle, and asked the farmer if he could work to rehabilitate it. The farmer said, "Go ahead, but it's useless. All that eagle knows is pecking corn like a chicken." The mountaineer began weeks of rigorous training with the eagle, forcing it to run after him so that it had to use its wings. Many times the eagle fell out of the limbs of trees onto its head. One day, finally, the mountaineer took the eagle to the top of a mountain and held it above his head on his wrist. Giving an upward thrust to his arm, he sent the eagle into the sky with a "Fly!" The eagle circled and wheeled upwards, straining, till it soon took off in a majestic sweep and looked directly into the sun. It was gone. It had regained its nature. It was an eagle once more. (Gerard Fuller in *Stories for All Seasons*; quoted by Fr. Botelho).

Dying for Another:

The story of St. Maximilian Kolbe is well-known. He was a Conventual Franciscan priest in Poland, and he was in a concentration camp during the Second World War. Three prisoners had escaped, and the authorities were determined that this should not happen again. For every prisoner that escaped they picked ten prisoners at random from the group, and those prisoners were condemned to die of starvation in isolation. After one young man was picked, someone who had a wife and young family back home, Maximilian stepped forward and offered to take his place. The soldiers were shocked at this, but they took him up on his offer, and the young man returned to the group. Maximilian died in a horrible fashion, as they were all locked in an underground bunker and left there to starve to death. All during that time he encouraged others, and inspired them with his prayers. After two weeks, Father Maximilian and several others of the ten were still alive; the others had died of starvation and dehydration. The authorities, wishing to empty the bunker, executed Kolbe and the others by lethal injection. Father Maximilian was beatified by Pope St. Paul VI in 1971 and canonized as a martyr by Pope St. John Paul II in 1982, and the prisoner whose place Maximilian had taken, wept through the entire ceremony. [Citation: [Pettinger, Tejvan](#). "Biography of Maximilian Kolbe", Oxford, UK - www.biographyonline.net. 3rd Aug 2014. Updated 2 March 2019.] I like to think that he understood what real love is, and that death would no longer have any fear for him. (Jack McArdle in *And that's the Gospel Truth*; quoted by (Fr. Botelho).