

BE STILL MY SOUL

*Be still my soul, the Lord is on your side;
Bear patiently the cross of grief and pain;
Leave to your God to order and provide;
In every change he faithful will remain.*

A few of us stood chatting outside after mass. We wondered what on earth the Old Testament readings of late were all about. They were from the first and second Books of Kings mentioning characters and places we had difficulty pronouncing. After reading it again on my own, I think they describe a period in the history of God's chosen people when they turned away from their true God and chose to worship false Gods. Many prophets were sent to warn them of the consequences of such actions but they were not listened to and were persecuted. At that time, Israel was a strong and rich country and was ruled by wealthy and powerful men who had little regard for the poor and the needy. I think we are living in a similar period of time when the world has turned its back on God and is disregarding the warnings of the consequences of doing so. I think the whole world is in great danger. It too is being ruled by the very rich and powerful. Can they not see that war solves nothing. It only brings death and suffering and destruction and creates a wasteland of fallen buildings and ruined industry. The poor get poorer and are starving, the multitude of people exiled and homeless gets even greater; there is nowhere to care for the sick and the dying and generations of men, women and children are used as cannon fodder and killed. The only one who benefits from war is Satan. When a country invades its neighbour, it is not just the peoples of those countries that are affected. The consequences affect the whole world.

There are many things I do not understand. The greatest problem in our world is poverty. There is a great divide between the rich and the poor. The rich are very, very rich and the poor are very, very poor! The financiers tell us to spend more to boost the economy, but I do not understand how that can work for it makes the rich even richer. It may improve things a little for the middle earner, only because they gain more possessions, but not for the poor and the needy, and the gap gets wider. How does it make things better for the third world countries whose peoples are desperately trying to escape to find a better life elsewhere. Surely, war only makes these problems worse. We have seen recently how reliant we are on IT and how vulnerable we are when it goes wrong or is used by malevolent people. In the election of our new government, there was a lot of talk about change, but the change must be worldwide. World leaders need to start talking of peace and not war; of love and not hatred; of sharing and not possessing. If we in the richer countries shared with those poorer countries the world would be a better place. As pope Francis says, "It may sound naïve and Utopian, yet we cannot renounce this lofty aim".

Since the age of sixteen, I worked until I was seventy. I have never been out of work and have never needed to claim unemployment benefit. God has always provided for me and my family. I am now retired with a nice home and a comfortable lifestyle for which I am truly grateful. Lately, before buying anything, I have asked myself, "Do I have what I need? Do I need what I have? Do I have more than I need? Can I give more to those in need?" I am an ordinary man living an ordinary life but so too were Jesus, Mary and Joseph until Jesus began his ministry. I think the change must start with us ordinary people.

Glory and praise to our God who alone gives life to our days.

Many are the blessings he bears to those who trust in his ways.