



From A Bishop's Journal (682)

“One Day at a Time, Sweet Jesus”

Poets have a knack for translating our deepest truths into very simple terms. I am reminded of the words of the old hymn, *One Day at a Time*, put into French by André Breton and René Ouellette, and set to music by Kristfersen and Wilkin.

An Old Song, Revisited

Who hasn't ever hummed or sung under his breath, these words of the refrain: “One day at a time, sweet Jesus, is all I'm asking from you. Just give me the strength to do every day what I have to do. Yesterday's gone, sweet Jesus, tomorrow may never be mine. Lord, help me today, and show me the way, one day at a time.” And the few verses to this song speak of humility, trust, and clarity of the singer. One [French] version of the song has these words; “I'm only a man, only a poor fellow, help me to believe in what I can be, to be what I am. Show me the way to go, sweet Jesus, for my good lead me always one day at a time.” “You lent me everything, life and health; I want to believe in you, in your goodness for mankind: a voice for singing, a soul for loving: help me live, yes, help me live one day at a time.” When it is a question of song and music, tastes can vary endlessly, but what I can say is that in these times of rest and prayer that are now mine, this song is very healing to me. I would like to have the authors' simplicity, to live the words more intensely, because this song is, to my mind, charged with the beauty of the Gospel.

Abandonment to Providence

This song made me go back to a text from Matthew's Gospel: “Do not worry about your livelihood, what you are to eat or drink or use for clothing. Is not life more than food? Is not the body more valuable than clothes? Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not more important than they? Which of you by worrying can add a moment to his life-span? As for clothes, why be concerned? Learn a lesson from the way the wild flowers grow. They do not work; they do not spin. Yet I assure you, not even Solomon in all his splendour was arrayed like one of these. If God can clothe in such splendour the grass of the field, which blooms today and is thrown on the fire tomorrow, will he not provide much more for you, O weak in faith! Stop worrying, then, over questions like, ‘What are we to eat, or what are we to drink, or what are we to wear?’ The unbelievers are always running after these things. Your heavenly Father knows all that you need. Seek first his kingship over you, his way of holiness, and all these things will be given you besides. Enough, then, of worrying about tomorrow. Let tomorrow take care of itself. Today has troubles enough of its own.”

Daily Adjustment

It is a total life attitude that Jesus tries to communicate to his disciples. When I hear him proclaim that we must first seek the kingship of God and His way of holiness, I ask myself how I can, day after day, “adjust” my will to His. The person is ‘just’ who lives ‘adjusted’ to God. This is the reason, it seems to me, why we must aim at living one day at a time and not over long stretches. There are certainly times when we must ‘guide’ our whole lives, in marriage, celibacy, consecrated life, and the priesthood. But on a daily basis it is vastly more important to aim at living “one day at a time.” “Yesterday’s gone, sweet Jesus, and tomorrow may not be mine.” Besides, there is this certainty that the Apostle Paul tells the Christians at Ephesus: “To him whose power now at work in us can do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine – to him be glory to the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations, world without end.”

“Ordinary Time”

I rejoice that the conciliar renewal has preserved two major liturgical seasons: feasts of Christ, like Christmas, the Epiphany, Easter, Pentecost, etc., and Ordinary Time which usually has thirty-four Sundays. This seems to be a reminder, in the face of the ‘fast food’ law, that there is the law of ‘spiritual food’. Wanting school and sports learning to be only a few days’ apprenticeship, wanting pregnancy to last but a few months, wanting the growing season to be a matter of days only, all of this would go against the very law of nature which defines the time, progress, and continuity. Wanting to be healed quickly, suddenly, smacks more of the miracle than of the power of the organism to regenerate and restore. Yes, “one day at a time” reminds us strangely but beautifully of our human condition.

A Time for Everything

In Holy Scripture there is a poem which was supposedly written by Qoheleth, and which is found in the Book of Ecclesiastes: “There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the heavens. A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to uproot the plant. A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to tear down, and a time to build. A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance. A time to scatter stones, and a time to gather them; a time to embrace, and a time to be far from embraces. A time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away. A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to be silent, and a time to speak. A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.” You can see that monotony is not meant to be part of our lives!

The Season of Love

I end this reflection with the words of a song composed in Edmundston in 1975, by the ALPEC group: “Season of love in the palms of our hands, I carve my name onto you, Jesus Christ! Springtime of love, Summer of love, Autumn of love, Winter of love, in the palms of our hands, I carve my name on you, Jesus Christ!” May we hear the voice of the Lord, day after day!

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