

Letter From a Minister December 2023

What a season... I am not talking about the weather but the time we live in. Two wars a few hours flight from us. The images coming from Israel and Palestine are awful and Job's lament (Job 3) echoes the despair of humanity when we see victims suffering on our screens. We understand the rage on both sides refusing to be comforted (Isaiah 22:4 and Matthew 2:18) and like Moses before us (Numbers 11:11) or even Jesus on the cross (Matthew 27:46) once again we ask why and lament.

Would these events challenge our faith?

Possibly and it is why we should keep the question "why" alive.

It is also the reason we need to lament in our worship. Ignoring the issues and following the lectionary without empathy or compassion will go against Jesus' commandment (Matthew 22:37). There is always a danger to not be the sheep following our Lord but to be the goat following habits and customs. Our universal church has a great tradition to be in the world – not from the world – and therefore to be one with the joy, the pain, the shortcoming, the wrongdoing and the hopes of this world.

From time to time, I am told not to do politics, but focus on nice hymns and beautiful praise. How could we praise without acknowledging the hurt and the needs around us? Justice ministry is to call repentance and justice and love. Without it our worship will sound like a noisy gong or clanging cymbal (1 Cor 13:1). Yes, we must include laments and praises, despairs and hopes, faith and doubts because how could we love if we don't feel the pain?

Having been involved with Joe in the Olive trees programme in Palestine, I am asked if I will go to a Palestinian demonstration. As a Christian, my heart is for those who suffer... the victims in Gaza and the families mourning their dead or crying for their kidnapped loved ones... and also those who suffer in Ukraine, Russia, North Korea, Myanmar, Turkestan and so many places. My heart is not for flags. There is one love. There is one suffering. Like John of the Cross, I look at the 'dark night' knowing that God is there too...

In Christ,
Laurent