

PRAYER FOCUS FOR MONTH OF MARCH 2017

Love and the Present of Time



Recently the movie *“The Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel”* was shown on free-to-air TV. Early in the film the following conversation takes place between two of the characters:

“There is no time like the present” the woman sighed.
“Ah yes,” her Indian taxi cab driver said, **“but there is also no present like the time!”**

The season of Lent is ‘the time’ now upon us. We are surrounded by blustering and blathering about policies and directions at both national and state levels. Loud and aggressive attempts to “put Australia/America/France...first” are appearing on the media landscape with some regularity. During Lent we are invited to conversion of heart and to intentionally practise putting others first –and engage in the “art of loving!”

In an article published in *The Guardian* early in February, Monica Tan wrote about her 30,000km trip around Australia. She says: “...And that’s when I said it...without irony or reserve: ‘I love Australia!’ I found so much to love about it. But understanding our history means reconciling with our First Peoples.”

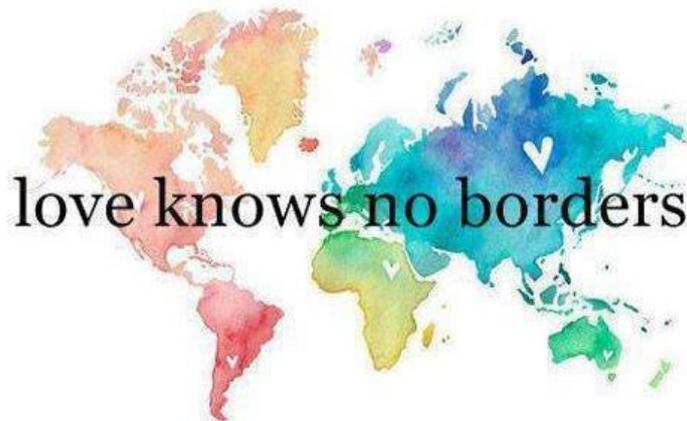
In these current days when our words, our world, indeed our whole earth community – in both an immediate and more remote sense, are seen as more and more broken and fractured, we need to find practical ways to come together. There are wounds to be healed, repairs to be done and protection to do. In the early years of the growth of the Christian faith, St Paul wrote to the Christian community in Corinth, by all accounts a wealthy and prosperous community. He wrote quite passionately about love. Monica Tan seems to be “channelling” Paul [1Cor 13:1-13] as she continues:

“...true love is a way of being, it is an action. Love requires commitment and tenacity. When you say you love, say, your partner or an old friend, you do not turn away as they speak of the darkest chapters of their past but listen quietly. Such confessions engender intimacy and deepen an understanding of their present woes. Countries are no different; history is the DNA of our present.”¹

As this Lent unfolds we continue to encounter friends and colleagues and watch the daily news. May we turn again to the basics – the heart of Jesus’ teaching: to love...and love...and love again personally, nationally and globally. It will be this kind of *conversion* and these kinds of *conversations* which will turn us full circle – towards the beating heart of God, visible in the goodness of all creation.

In the “present” of this ‘time’, and knowing there is ‘no time like the present’ - are we ready to be nudged, pushed and beckoned into a new place where each of us is reminded of the dream sung in the depths of every heart? Let us **respond to the echoes of God’s love, where God, present with us, calls us** into a future full of hope.

Love, the Audacity and the Potential



The broadcaster and author Krista Tippett explores the virtues that she believes are the “breeding grounds for wisdom.” Of those virtues” she writes, “one is love, a way of being that we have scarcely begun to mine.” She writes:

Love is the superstar virtue of virtues, and the most watered down word in the English language. I love this weather. I love your dress. And what we’ve done with the word, we’ve done with this thing – this possibility, this essential bond, this act. We’ve made it private, contained it in family, when its audacity is in its potential to cross tribal lines...We’ve lived it as a feeling, when it is a way of being.²

¹ Monica Tan, *I’m Dizzily in Love with Australia. Patriotism Shouldn’t Be Reserved for the Right*. Guardian Australia 1 February 2017.

² Krista Tippett, *Becoming Wise: An Inquiry into the Mystery and Art of Living*. New York, NY, Penguin Press, 2016, p.104

We are invited to reflect on the “audacity” and the capacity of love to cross “lines” or borders or indeed history. What might we learn from the First Australian and our Papua New Guinean sisters and brothers about love of creation? Paul Daley, a regular columnist in *The Guardian* says:

“Think about what love of country really means... to my mind the Indigenous experience of loving one’s country...is a spiritual connection. Country: the earth from which the life force grows and to which it should ultimately return. Country: the place that provides food and shelter, and sustainable natural wealth. Country: the beauty of its trees, rocks, seas and creatures, and its sky overhead, to be celebrated and shared by all who experience it.”³

In reflecting on these words we can open ourselves to the reality that everything in life is connected and leads us ever more fully into oneness with God and with all of creation

In their own unique way, our First Australian sisters and brothers and First Peoples around the world are inviting us to see with new eyes. They model for us to a deeper love of all creation. God invites us to see with new eyes this transformation into which we are called: to be attuned to how all of creation lives and moves and has its being in God.

In a 1904 letter, the poet Rainer Maria Rilke spoke of the power and importance of love and expressed it this way:

“Love is perhaps the most difficult task given us, the most extreme, the final proof and text, for which all the other work is only preparation.”⁴

Finally, Luke Pearson a Gamilaroi man, who founded IndigenousX , notes - by way of ‘preparation’:

“I have tasted Australia, smelled it, walked it, seen the lay of its land and read the story of its life, my love for it is visceral and spiritual...who better to lead the way than those who have lived it so for over 60 000 years?”⁵

If love is ‘the breeding ground of wisdom’ – who indeed?

³ Paul Daley, Australian Patriotism: It’s not about War, It’s in Our Love of the Land. Guardian Australia 7 May 2016.

⁴ Maria Rainer Rilke, Letters to a Young Poet, Dover Publications, 2002.

⁵ Luke Pearson, Don’t Tell Me to ‘Get Over’ a Colonialism that is Still Being Implemented Today. Guardian Australia 31 January 2017.