

## TULIPS: (Two Lips!)

Here we are, in the 4<sup>th</sup> week of 'lockdown', some of us self-isolating, some of us involuntarily isolating and some of us having the pleasures (as well as the trials and tribulations) of living in the company of family members. But are we 'down'? Easter, the central and pivotal event for our faith, has passed without the customary ways in which we celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus. Yet we have channels of communication (physical and spiritual) available to us in which we are truly blessed.

We have also been blessed with the recent fine weather. Being one of the fortunate people with a garden, I've spent the last three weeks immersed in putting my garden – physically and metaphorically – in order, sowing seeds, preparing plants and soil for what I hope will be a colourful summer display. There's been time to notice small changes from day to day as I've tended to the garden, and, in this reflection, I thought I'd share with you some of the pictures I've taken as my very random tulip collection amassed over the years, has bloomed. I hadn't kept count of how many different varieties I'd planted! I'm told by the TV gardeners and others, that tulips have a limited life span: they put on a magnificent show for their first year then steadily decline, so buy new bulbs every year (consumer manipulation at work?) Well, I think my bulbs have proved them wrong! They have produced a display as vibrant as any I can remember, and they are giving me great joy!



Here are 5 'tulip' facts I extrapolated from a more comprehensive list:

1. You can find tulips in almost any colour.
2. There are over 150 species of tulips with over 3,00 varieties.
3. If you cut tulips, they'll grow in your vase at least another inch.
4. Tulips will bend and grow towards the light.
5. Some are scented.

Reflecting on these facts, I find they mirror some observations I've made over the past few weeks as the Covid 19 pandemic has taken hold:



*Fact 1 & 2:* How uplifting it is to see our ethnically diverse nation pulling together. I sense a greater integration within the population, and I thank God for it.

*Fact 3:* Even if the tulips are cut down, they have obtained sufficient energy from their food source, namely the bulb, to keep growing even when separated from it. Humans, along with the rest of the natural world, have great resilience. If we are rooted in our faith, we are supplied with the strength to, not only exist, but to *grow* through trials and tribulations.

*Fact 4:* The stems of tulips, along with most plants, have the flexibility to adjust their position in order to reach the light. God, our source of being and light, enables us to find our way through the darkness and strive towards his wonderful light if we put our trust in him.

*Fact 5:* Even in our limited circumstances, by our prayers and loving actions, we can spread the fragrance of Jesus amongst those we are in contact with. In the wise words of Rev Kyla's mother: "(we can) bloom where (we) are planted".

When I began my gardening marathon, I wasn't sure if, how or when my tulips would make an appearance. They have all popped up at different times, which has extended my pleasure! Many aspects of our lives are uncertain as I write, not least when we shall eventually emerge from 'lockdown'. We can rely on the seasons changing and nature waking up from winter slumber, despite the ravages of the winter storms. We can rely on God, our sustainer and provider "as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death" (Ps 23).

Whatever our state of mind at this time, we can take comfort in the words of St



Paul, who often found himself in life or death situations:

"I have *learned* (italics mine!) to be content with whatever I have. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything in Christ who strengthens me".

*St Paul's letter to the Philippians 4:11-13)*

Whilst in prison Paul praised God in song and God heard! (*Acts 16: 25)*

Where did the subtitle to this reflection come from you may ask; (I do like a play on words!)

A little song, which may be part of your childhood, came to mind:

Two little eyes to look to God,  
Two little ears to hear his word,  
**TWO little LIPS to sing his praise,**  
Two little feet to walk his ways,  
Two little hands to do his will,  
And one little heart to love him still.



Suggested Daily Resolution: At the end of each day think of something that has happened in your day to thank and praise God for.

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