

Reflection for 20th October

Lockdown, isolation, self- isolation, loneliness, freedom, leisure, solitude, frustration, boredom.....

The list could go on, for all these words, both positive and negative, have been used and experienced by one or another of us during the greater part of this year.

Lockdown was imposed by others and affected all of us. Isolation was experienced by many who lived alone and for one reason or another could not get out of their solitary flat or other accommodation.

Self-isolation had a more positive element as it was voluntary even if strongly recommended. Voluntary in some cases only in the sense of being self-imposed.

Loneliness has been experienced by many who live alone, even if they had done so quite happily for some time. A lady interviewed on TV while sitting at an outside café table, drinking coffee with a friend, said no-one had been in her flat since March. It got very lonely. That's why she was meeting her friend for coffee and a face to face chat. We all need interaction with others and while Facetime, Skype and Zoom have been a boon to many they have not replaced human contact, cuddles from our nearest and dearest who live elsewhere, especially smaller grandchildren.

All the above are negative and unhelpful or challenging, depending on our approach to them.

Now for the positive aspects:

Freedom from a sometimes boring routine, deadlines, commuting in crowded trains and buses or on jam packed roads and motorways, freedom to plan our own use of time: maybe to recover a long lost hobby, spend more time outdoors, discover beauty spots on our own doorsteps that we had ignored for years. But a good use of freedom requires self-discipline, or we can drift off into just killing time.

Leisure. What do we mean by leisure? I recently reread an address on leisure by Mother Mary Clare, SLG Leisure is an absence of the need to earn a living, an absence of work in that sense. I quote "Leisure should have the quality of rhythmic repose and creative energy which can be likened to the ebb and flow of the waves of the sea". Have we used our extra leisure time creatively?

What new thing can you do now? Many have learnt a new language online, others taken up a new hobby, yet others found a new fulfilment in the extra time to support those shut in or lonely. Frustration and boredom come when

we do not use our leisure time in this rhythmic way combining both positive repose and energetic activity. And sitting and sewing or knitting, doing that marquetry kit you were given years ago and never got round to, taking up painting or drawing, trying new recipes, getting out in the workshop with your carpentry tools can be energetic activities in this sense ... the list is endless of activities to enable this creative activity.

Solitude. Time to be alone, to be quiet and listen to God, to pray and to look and see and be thankful. Prayer must be at the heart of our response to all our circumstances. Remember how often in the Gospels we are told that Jesus got up a great while before day and went out into the hills to find that quiet and solitude that is conducive to prayer. We should seek it too.

A final word that is also positive: thanksgiving. "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made to God."

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him all creatures here below,
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen"

References: Leisure Mother Mary Clare, SLG Fairacres Publication #37,
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Matthew 14, 23; Philippians 4, 6-7