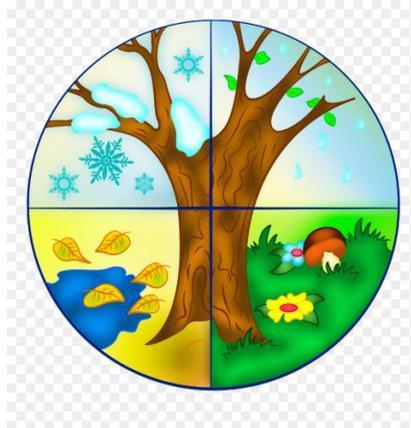


Seasons



To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven:

A time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

A time to weep, and a time to mourn, and a time to dance:

A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together: a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing;

A time to get, 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 keep silence, and a time to speak;

A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

Ecclesiasticus 3: 1-8 (KJV)

Sound familiar? If you are not a regular reader of the Bible and/or you are of a certain age, the words may ring bells in the form of a mid- sixties hit by the Byrds entitled 'Turn, Turn, Turn'. Or if a slightly earlier vintage, the version by Pete Seager.

As I was typing out the words, they leapt off the page as being even more pertinent to this moment in time than when I chose them for this reflection, which indeed reflects the timeless nature of this passage. Appropriately, it is not known when it was written, though some attribute the book to King Solomon. Ecclesiastes, as it is sometimes known, forms part of the Bible wisdom literature and, in a nutshell, the rather cynical, world-weary protagonist is questioning the meaning of life, searching for spiritual significance in a life that appears outwardly meaningless. I think its an honest book which doesn't flinch from voicing the doubts, struggles and disillusionment which, if *we're* honest, we all experience at some point in our lives. Some though, may call it a depressing read. There are, however, Job-like echoes in God's response to this questioning, namely "I am in control!" A positive surely!

Interesting then, that, as Jackie mentioned in a previous reflection, Prince Philip chose a passage from Ecclesiasticus for his funeral; not an expected choice one would immediately think, but I would venture to say, Prince Philip came across as a pragmatist.

Since time immemorial, to quote another popular song, "Times they are a - changing". That's 'nothing new under the sun.' (Ecclesiasticus!) History is a continuum of changing 'seasons'. Changes, however subtle, can be unsettling, especially if we are safely ensconced in our own 'comfort zone' (or we have the privilege of having comfort!). The negative aspects mentioned in the passage seem, well, very negative. Who wants to 'tear down'? Who wants 'war'? Who wants to 'kill'? (problematic, those, in the light of the 10 Commandments!) BUT, the thought occurred to me; how much we, at this moment in time, are rejoicing at the prospect of being able to embrace one another again or to dance (and sing!) Without the 'negatives' in life, would we appreciate the 'positives'? Are the 'negatives' mentioned here part of the rhythm of life – a necessary part in the overall scheme of things? Yin and Yang?

Facing change requires a certain mindset and resolve. The world around us is changing fast. I don't know if I'm representative of the human race, but I can wake in the early hours full of forboding for the future – the 'anxiety hour', or I can wake full of optimism and excitement about scientific developments that are now 'out there'. Diminutive Greta Thunberg is inspiring! Out of the mouths of babes.....

Would you concur that 2021 is one such 'watershed' moment – a 'turning of the 'seasons'? If so, (how) shall we rise to meet it? Shall we turn to face the day?

As Psalm 31: 15 reminds us:

“My times are in your hands”.