

St James' Memorial Katrina Dawson and Tori Johnson

My attempt to make an offering here on behalf of Katrina Dawson and Tori Johnson is in a few *words*, fewer in number than the beautiful flowers that fill Martin Place, which with their perfume silently witness to the city about *love, compassion, solidarity, and personal qualities that never fade*.

In weather maps we learned that *synoptic* charts show the eye where flows lines connect co-equal points of atmospheric pressure. The City's flowers express a *synergy* and *co-equal sharing* of the deepest values and realities; *compassion, sympathy – and energy for good* that unites people.

Something like a *co-advocacy* works here, in which everyone's response is *to urge*, or *wish for* or even *pray for* a sufficient personal resource, even a *co-energy* such that grief and grieving does not simply add to the the destructive and corrosive loss generated by *the lamentable and repudiated act* at its base.

It is because of *being strongly for*, those who are in the bewilderment of loss, that the Parish is here at the end of this working week so close to Christmas –part of *the co-advocacy of faith* that draws forth *shared provisions in a time of grief and loss* - at the unexpected and invasive ending of lives.

Beyond the field of flowers: I express a hope that each who suffers may find something like that *interior flower* or inner-gift or soul-resource, or re-ponder the form and essence of all that is beautiful; or even *glimpse the source for all that is beautiful and lovely*, that which endures forever.

Is that what is at the heart of the Martin Place field of flowers? A desire to acknowledge that space in the heart *where the beautiful won't wither away or become 'the past'*?

In the liturgy the Church prays weekly 'Lift up your hearts' and the response 'we lift them to the Lord'

Something of those fine qualities referred to was seen distinctively in those whose mortal lives ended just down the road within this parish, within the working space of many here.

Now, if I may - The Christmas story and season has much to offer children and the child in us all. I'm a fan of Santa and of Christmas trees, and Crowns and crackers . . . It's apt that there is a Feast in the Year that spreads its energy out from a core reality beyond all that and which can create a sub-world of human joy. Yet there is an *Adult Christ at Christmas* whose total-story is *the source of our advocacy and co-advocacy for each other, and of hoped for joy. We see Him as God's advocacy, as the one who advocates for us, God's provision and provision- for all that happens along the way of life.*

As much or more than as a Baby, we refer to Our Lord today as Advocate, Counsellor, and Comforter; one who stands alongside, amongst and within us as the mysterious God, God both of presence and absence.

Some of the cost of that Advocacy is hinted at in the terrible story of the death of the innocents in St Matthew's story, where the ruler of the day takes the lives of all the two year olds in and around Bethlehem. Or was it Pakistan? In an earlier Carol Service, we read this about that distant mirror:

*This is . . . humanity at its worst, and . . . is not confined to far off times. In Genesis, Rachel weeps for the children she is unable to bear—**Jeremiah's** reference to Rachel weeping alludes to the Israelites being taken off into captivity by the Babylonians. The preservation of the infant Jesus is sharpened by these contrasts – the innocents and their mothers. But Our Lord's time will come, even when he is a young man. Perhaps the hardest and sharpest experiences in life today also gather around 'the death of the innocent' - cancer, mental illness, car accident, the good dying young, the loss of a baby at birth, or perhaps the betrayal of trust or of love, or the preferencing of war; Plus all the matters that provoke Royal Commissions.*

So we have a an announcement of a comfort and a hope, even when it is strongly counterfactual – and that has to be its point, if it too is not a mere gloss

There's a link though both testaments which is 'the suffering of the innocents ***whom God names as innocent and who will be vindicated*** -, and one can trace that from the irrational death of Abel at the hand of Cain, through Job's sufferings and the Suffering Servant of Isaiah right on through to the Resurrection of Jesus . . . where we are told that at first no one can say anything because they are simply beside themselves at the encounter that overwhelms them.

Which now may leave us stronger and with a provision and which I think speaks to what we try to hold to in this time of extraordinary loss.