

Thoughts for our Troubled Times—Remembering C.S. Lewis

Patrick Claffey

The great British writer and scholar C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) was very much a man of his time. He was an intellectual Christian who spoke to the world in his writing, but who also listened to what was going on in the world of his time. It was a turbulent and troubled world: he lived through two world wars and the early difficult years of the cold war, while his personal life and his faith were also often troubled and tested. He held academic positions teaching English literature and both Oxford and Cambridge. He was a prolific writer in a wide number of areas; Christian apologetics, fantasy, fiction and children's literature.



He is less read today, but in fact he had a deep and often lasting influence on thinking Christians of all denominations of an earlier generation. They admired his openness, his deep humility and his brand of practical Christianity. Works such as *Mere Christianity*, *The Screwtape Letters* and *Surprised by Joy* remain an essential part of their religious culture and their thinking about faith.

Lewis' name came up recently in a wonderful Facebook posting by the naturalist and author Mary Colwell. As she put it: "Since nuclear threats are rising again, I love the perspective offered here by C.S. Lewis in 1948 almost 75 years ago, but as relevant as ever." Lewis was writing at a time when the threat of nuclear destruction was very real and where the daily lives of ordinary people were marked by fear of an ever present danger. We live in a time when these threats have become real again. Writing the following text Lewis sought to put things in perspective and these words surely speak to our time.

He writes: "In one way we think a great deal too much of the atomic bomb. 'How are we to live in an atomic age?' I am tempted to reply: 'Why, as you would have lived in the sixteenth century when the plague visited London almost every year, or as you would have lived in a Viking age when raiders from Scandinavia might land and cut your throat any night; or indeed, as you are already living in an age of cancer, an age of syphilis, an age of paralysis, an age of air raids, an age of railway accidents, an age of motor accidents.'

In other words, do not let us begin by exaggerating the novelty of our situation. Believe me, dear sir or madam, you and all whom you love were already sentenced to death before the atomic bomb was invented: and quite a high percentage of us were going to die in unpleasant ways. We had, indeed, one very great advantage over our ancestors—anaesthetics; but we have that still. It is perfectly ridiculous to go about whimpering and drawing long faces because the scientists have added one more chance of painful and premature death to a world which already bristled with such chances and in which death itself was not a chance at all, but a certainty.

This is the first point to be made: and the first action to be taken is to pull ourselves together. If we are all going to be destroyed by an atomic bomb, let that bomb when it comes find us doing sensible and human things—praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing tennis, chatting to our friends over a pint and a game of darts—not huddled together like frightened sheep and thinking about bombs. They may break our bodies (a microbe can do that) but they need not dominate our minds."

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MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR LENT 2022 (Part I)

Lent is a favourable time for personal and community renewal, as it leads us to the paschal mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For our Lenten journey in 2022, we will do well to reflect on Saint Paul's exhortation to the Galatians: "Let us not grow tired of doing good, for in due time we shall reap our harvest, if we do not give up. So then, while we have the opportunity (*kairós*), let us do good to all" (*Gal* 6:9-10).

1. Sowing and reaping

In these words, the Apostle evokes the image of sowing and reaping, so dear to Jesus (cf. *Mt* 13). Saint Paul speaks to us of a *kairós*: an opportune time for sowing goodness in view of a future harvest. What is this "opportune time" for us? Lent is certainly such an opportune time, but so is our entire existence, of which Lent is in some way an image. [1] All too often in our lives, greed, pride and the desire to possess, accumulate and consume have the upper hand, as we see from the story of the foolish man in the Gospel parable, who thought his life was safe and secure because of the abundant grain and goods he had stored in his barns (cf. *Lk* 12:16-21). Lent invites us to conversion, to a change in mindset, so that life's truth and beauty may be found not so much in possessing as in giving, not so much in accumulating as in sowing and sharing goodness.

The first to sow is God himself, who with great generosity "continues to sow abundant seeds of goodness in our human family" (*Fratelli Tutti*, 54). During Lent we are called to respond to God's gift by accepting his word, which is "living and active" (*Heb* 4:12). Regular listening to the word of God makes us open and docile to his working (cf. *Jas* 1:21) and bears fruit in our lives. ...This call to sow goodness should not be seen as a burden but a grace, whereby the Creator wishes us to be actively united with his own bountiful goodness.

What about the harvest? Do we not sow seeds in order to reap a harvest? Of course! Saint Paul points to the close relationship between sowing and reaping when he says: "Anyone who sows sparsely will reap sparsely as well, and anyone who sows generously will reap generously as well" (*2 Cor* 9:6). ...In God, no act of love, no matter how small, and no "generous effort" will ever be lost (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 279). ...

In truth, we see only a small portion of the fruits of what we sow, since, according to the Gospel proverb, "one sows, while another reaps" (*Jn* 4:37). When we sow for the benefit of others, we share in God's own benevolent love: "it is truly noble to place our hope in the hidden power of the seeds of goodness we sow, and thus to initiate processes whose fruits will be reaped by others" (*Fratelli Tutti*, 196). Sowing goodness for the benefit of others frees us from narrow self-interest, infuses our actions with gratuitousness, and makes us part of the magnificent horizon of God's benevolent plan.

The word of God broadens and elevates our vision: it tells us

that the real harvest is eschatological, the harvest of the last, undying day. The mature fruit of our lives and actions is "fruit for eternal life" (*Jn* 4:36), our "treasure in heaven" (*Lk* 12:33; 18:22). Jesus himself uses the image of the seed that dies in the ground in order to bear fruit as a symbol of the mystery of his death and resurrection (cf. *Jn* 12:24); while Saint Paul uses the same image to speak of the resurrection of our bodies: "What is sown is perishable, but what is raised is imperishable; what is sown is contemptible but what is raised is glorious; what is sown is weak, but what is raised is powerful; what is sown is a natural body, and what is raised is a spiritual body" (*1 Cor* 15:42-44). The hope of resurrection is the great light that the risen Christ brings to the world, for "if our hope in Christ has been for this life only, we are of all people the most pitiable. In fact, however, Christ has been raised from the dead, as the first-fruits of all who have fallen asleep" (*1 Cor* 15:19-20). Those who are intimately united to him in love "by dying a death like his" (*Rom* 6:5) will also be united to his resurrection for eternal life (cf. *Jn* 5:29). "Then the upright will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (*Mt* 13:43).

Masses Times

Sundays: Vigil, 6pm (Saturday), 9.30am, 11am, 5pm

Croatian Community Mass 6.30pm

French-speaking community mass 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month at 12.30

Daily masses 10am only for the moment

-Rosary daily after 10am mass

Baptisms:

1st and 3rd Sundays of each month, request forms available from parish office

Marriages

For the use of St Mary's Church and Pre-Nuptial Enquiries please contact the Parish Office

Parish Office open Monday—Friday, 10.30-14.00

INTENTIONS

26/27 March

6pm Vigil: Maureen McGrath, Anniversary

11am George Nagle Anniversary

5pm. Egle Flood, special intention

Stase & Romualdas, Special Intention

Ieva, Special Intention