THOUGHTS THAT BREATHE

One day, in the not too distant future, I will take the bus into Dublin’s main street and there, I’ll place a flower on the plinth of Daniel O’Connell’s statue, a small public token of appreciation for an Irish politician who campaigned for the abolition of slavery in the British Empire, with the same focus and energy that he applied to the Irish cause of Catholic Emancipation and repeal of the Act of Union.

Daniel O’Connell denounced injustice wherever he found it, often risking the wrath of Americans and damage to the Irish cause. At an anti-slavery meeting in London, in 1829, he declared, “of all men living, an American citizen, who is the owner of slaves, is the most despicable.” At another meeting that year he denounced George Washington for owning slaves, adding, “America, it is a foul stain upon your character.”

When the most famous black abolitionist of the nineteenth century, Frederick Douglass, visited Dublin, in 1845, he joined Daniel O’Connell in addressing an anti-slavery rally. Later, in a letter to W.L. Garrison, he wrote, “Mr. O’Connell was in his happiest mood while delivering this speech. He had but to open his mouth to put us in possession of thoughts that breathe and words that burn.”

In recent weeks, statues of men who have profited from the enslavement of others, especially black people, have been knocked off their pedestals in the United States and in Great Britain, amidst a raging debate about systemic racism, history, and its’ protagonists. This may be the time, for all people living in this island, to rejoice that one of our political giants was devoted to non-violent action for the abolition of slavery. Maybe we could visit the statue again, noticing the details and most especially, the four-winged Victories at the base of the monument. Each represents a virtue attributed to the Liberator – Courage; Fidelity; Patriotism and Eloquence.

May Daniel O’Connell’s thoughts on inclusivity, breathe courageous, tolerant life into our society as we move into an exciting chapter of Irish history, under the leadership of a new coalition government: Fine Gael, Fine Fáil and the Green Party. He has much to teach all of us.

Sr. Maeve Mc Mahon O.P.
You are invited to begin this prayer service with a short reflection on where you are in your own country at this stage of the Covid 19 crisis.

**Is it return to lockdown?**
**Is it partial lockdown?**
**Is it moving slowly out of lockdown?**

Include a short pause to ask yourselves: **What this particular phase means for you personally for your community and for your country?**

**Leader:** Creative loving God we thank you for bringing us together today. Help us to remain connected to you as we live our present reality, imagine our future, and discover new ways of being.

The following read by one person:

- May we and all your people know your healing love now and always. May we know your will for us and remain open to the challenges and surprises of this time.
- May we embrace the future with courageous hope and unwavering faith in your abiding presence with us.
- May the presence and wisdom of the Spirit continue giving us new ways of looking at our world, uniting us as one with you, with one another and with all whom we are called to serve each day.

**Suggested Psalm or psalms:**

Ps 41:1-13, Ps. 91: 1-16, Ps. 143:1-12

**Suggested Gospel readings:**


Pause for quiet reflection on texts chosen.

**Some things we have come to realize:**

(Maybe read between two people)

- Our new reality is reminding us that we are all equal, regardless of our culture, religion, occupation, financial situation or how famous we are. This disease treats us all equally.
SOME CREATIVE REFLECTIONS FROM OUR COVID19 EXPERIENCE WEEK11

- It is reminding us that we are all connected and something that effects one person, has an effect on another. It is reminding us that the false borders that we have put up have little value as this virus does not need a passport or a visa. It is reminding us, by oppressing us for a short time, of those in the world, whose whole life is spent in oppression.

- It is reminding us of how materialistic our society has become and how, when in times of difficulty, we remember that it is the essentials that we need food, water, medicine as opposed to the luxuries that we sometimes unnecessarily give value to.

- It is reminding us that our true work is not our job, that is what we do, not what we were created to do. Our true work is to look after each other, to protect each other and to be of benefit to one another.

- It is reminding us that the power of free will is in our hands. We can choose to cooperate and help each other, to share, to give, to help and to support each other, or we can choose to be selfish, to hoard, to look after only our self. Indeed, it is difficulties that bring out our true colours.  (Bill Gates)

(PAUSE, REFLECT AND SHARE HOW THE ABOVE SPEAKS TO YOUR OWN REALITY AND EXPERIENCE)

Do Not Be Afraid – David Haas

I will come to you in the silence
I will lift you from all your fear
You will hear my voice
I claim you as my choice
Be still, and know I am near

I am hope for all who are hopeless
I am eyes for all who long to see
In the shadows of the night,
I will be your light
Come and rest in Me

Do not be afraid, I am with you
I have called you each by name
Come and follow me
I will bring you home
I love you and you are mine

I am strength for all the despairing
Healing for the ones who dwell in shame
All the blind will see, the lame will all run free
And all will know my name

Do not be afraid, I am with you
I have called you each by name
Come and follow me
I will bring you home
I love you and you are mine

I am the Word that leads all to freedom
I am the peace the world cannot give
I will call your name, embracing all your pain
Stand up, now, walk, and live

Do not be afraid, I am with you
I have called you each by name
Come and follow me
I will bring you home
I love you and you are mine

Concluding Reflection - Signs of Hope:

- ‘And the people stayed home and read books, and listened, and rested and exercised and made art, and played games, and learned new ways of being, and were still.

- And listened more deeply. Some meditated, some prayed, some danced. Some met their shadows. And people began to think differently.

- And the people healed. And, in the absence of people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless and heartless ways, the earth began to heal.

- And when the danger passed, and the people joined together again, they grieved their losses, and made new choices, and dreamed new images, and created new ways to live and heal the earth fully, as they had been healed’. (Taken from poem: Lockdown by Fr. Richard Hendrick OFM)
O Mary,
You shine continuously on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope.
We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick, who, at the foot of the cross, were united with Jesus’ suffering, and persevered in your faith.

“Protectress of all people”, you know our needs, and we know that you will provide, so that, as at Cana in Galilee, joy and celebration may return after this time of trial.

Help us, Mother of Divine Love, to conform ourselves to the will of the Father and to do what Jesus tells us. For he took upon himself our suffering, and burdened himself with our sorrows to bring us, through the cross, to the joy of the Resurrection. Amen.

We ask Mary, the mother of Jesus and our mother, to intercede for us and for our world as we pray Pope Francis’s prayer together.

Sow emerging and young pigs enjoying the sunshine!
The delicacy of the sweet pea and the strength of the sunflower.

Sr. Pauline McGrath OP