

My contribution to eternity

Beloved person,

When cleaning up at home you can just come across them: old photos. Old images then call up memories from your younger years, friends and holidays from the community of the past, from all those who were dear to you and still are. There are moments that you can long to return to, to experience a happy period in your life once again. However, a photo or image can also remind you of missed opportunities or of silent sorrow. How difficult can it be to break away from that 'time travel' and leave the past behind? We can also learn from history to look forward again. What would it be like if...?

Hopefully, during the summer months (in the Netherlands), during the travels we may make, we will also find the time to reflect on our lives and consider what is truly valuable and what needs adjustment. What will be asked of us when we return to everyday life? Thinking about what the first half of this year has brought us, we find ourselves at the pivotal point of the year, not yet knowing what the coming period will bring us. What will give us something to hold onto? What can we rely on? Which principles have proven their value over the centuries and can offer us a perspective in the uncertain times in which we now find ourselves?

Throughout history, people have sought guidance and answers to these questions, and also something to hold onto. According to historian Beatrice de Graaf, we can find these by adopting a fundamental attitude that reflects the *seven cardinal virtues*. Aristotle was a thinker who established that courage, restraint, wisdom, and justice are the prerequisites for moral and ethical conduct. The Apostle Paul formulated the three complementary values in his letter to the Corinthians: faith, hope, and love. Seven beautiful and powerful words that reflect a fundamental attitude that is only valuable if they are exemplified by people like you and me in our daily lives. And thankfully, that is indeed happening. We see that people, sometimes alone and sometimes in groups, stand up against violence and injustice, thereby giving others hope by standing up for peace and justice.

People possess the remarkable ability to continually recover and overcome difficulties. We can learn from each other - no matter what life throws at us - to accept situations by courageously forging new paths. It makes me believe in myself, which in turn gives me hope and comfort. So does the realisation that everything that happens in our lives is temporary and finite. The awareness of our temporality is a hallmark of being human. It fosters a growing wisdom of how precious life is. Every person represents a new beginning and has the potential to add something to life. To bring something of value into the world that wasn't there previously. That is phenomenal!

It makes a difference how we approach life and to know that we are part of an eternal creative whole. Parents have raised and educated us, teachers and many other people have helped shape us. Even when they are no longer there, much of their life continues in us. That is a timeless process and reaches much further than our own existence. Further than we will ever know ourselves...

Time and again, people have arisen with a unique sense of eternal value, one that extends beyond a single life and extends into the infinite. Therefore, you cannot see or experience it. Virtues or eternal values are indispensable as gentle forces in today's and tomorrow's society. Living according to these values matters, and is not old fashioned...

And:

This is what remains: faith, hope, and love; these three; but the greatest of these is love.¹

Love for creation, for yourself and for your neighbour. Love that must always be expressed. Today we pay tribute to life. And to the lives of those who preceded us in that love, also today. There is namely a world to be won!

With a warm-hearted greeting, gladly your brother,

Jan Zwart

With thanks to Sr Judith Masselman for her input to this Weekly Letter.



We remember those who preceded before us

¹ 1 Corinthians 13