

Living from our foundation

Beloved person,

As we approach Peace Week, which this year has the theme 'Doing nothing is not an option', I would like to share this poignant prayer by Erik Borgman with you.

*God,
it is written,
concerning Jesus, Your Son,
that He came into his own,
but his own did not receive him.*

*He was thereby part
of an innumerable multitude:
not accepted where they were born,
driven out where they grew up,
pushed back when they set out,
neglected and harassed where they arrived.
Threatened and driven out
to scare others off.*

*But they came into their own:
their world, their kind,
Your generous creation*

*where there is room for everyone
and food, and shelter, and company.
Where it is a blessing for all
when all share their gifts*

*That they keep coming,
that they keep giving,
that they keep sharing:
their presence,
their faith and their hope,
their courage, their perseverance.
Being an image of You thereby,
of Your incomprehensible compassion
for us.*

*That we do not suffocate within ourselves,
but open up!¹*

What touches me is that the words not only paint a picture of two thousand years ago, but are still recognisable and relevant: in many harrowing situations in our world, there is a lack of perspective, compassion, and equality. As if more worlds exist: one of us and one of them. But who then *does* belong to us, to me, and who does not...? Are we all children of God, or must I, if I am honest, sometimes confess to my own dismay, that based on my views, I attach more value to one than to the other?

It is good to realise that we feel more easily connected to people who resemble us, speak our language, understand our customs, or share our concerns. Those who are further removed from us are more likely to remain a stranger, someone we – often unconsciously and unintentionally - do not *truly* see.

How does my, our, apostolic foundation actually translate into my heart, my mind, my words and my choices? How much of what I call 'ours' do I actually consider, self-evidently, to be *my* own? And what happens when someone else lays claim to that same space?

That is what Borgman's words do to me as well. He makes it deliberately difficult for me with a sentence like: '*they came into their own*'. Those words turn something around and show: whose world is this actually?

As if we possess something that is ours and not of others. He broadens the perspective even further and connects it with creation which - without regard to the individual - gives and takes and where it is a blessing for *all* if *all* people share what has been given to them.

Then equality is not an abstract ideal, but an exercise in letting go of what we take for granted. The other person is not a guest in my world – my street, my classroom, my country – together we are part of exactly the same mystery. Therein we have been given the capacity to be compassionate, and it is up to us to make room for that capacity time and again. What would it do to us if, living from that connection with the source of all life, we tried to love – even against the tide, if necessary?

Living from our foundation begins when we do not look away from the darkness, nor do we make reality seem better than it is. It requires us to not reduce others to their background, opinions, status, vulnerability or mistakes. That we do not deny the differences, but to not let them define us either. Especially in a time that tempts us to become hardened, we must be prepared to seek a different perspective. Not naively, but with our eyes wide open to what is happening in the world. Will you join us?

With a warm-hearted greeting, gladly your sister,
Nanda Ziere



We renew our (baptismal) promise to continue ensuring a safe climate

¹ Erik Borgman, lay Dominican and Emeritus Professor of Public Theology at Tilburg University in the Netherlands. The last sentence is by Huub Oosterhuis: 'That we do not suffocate within ourselves, but open up'..