

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens

- Ecclesiastes 3: 1, NIV



Today is a dull day, with the sun determined to stay hidden and just a quiet energy around the place. I've come in from a winter's walk around the college remembering those who have ambled these paths before me. From Superior Lucie Mérilhou, who started Roehampton on its journey with the Sacred Heart in 1850, on to so many more wonderful and inspiring women from the Society of the Sacred Heart and those educated by them. I find this time of year lends well to taking the day slowly and finding space to listen deeply. To embrace the hope of the coming spring, while through the current silence to search for the liminal space, where there is nourishment in the wisdom of the past and promise of what is yet to come.

While I walk, I am mindful of God's continued presence and give thanks for the commitment by so many who strived to discover and make known the love of the Heart of Jesus while within these walls. As we enter the new year and celebrate these past 180 years, we do so in a time and place that feels painfully fractured. So let our commitment to building intentional community, one that is rooted in and lived out through gospel values and that is imbedded in the charisms gifted to us, be a beacon of hope and light in the darkness.

Our gospel values are based on the life and teaching, and the death and resurrection, of Jesus. He showed us through his life's ministry that to follow Him means crossing borders, reaching out to those on the margins, and caring for all creation. We are being called to build a community which is diverse and yet drawn to unity and inclusivity. With Jesus as our example, God transforms our lives and calls us to act with compassion and to see the face of Christ in every encounter. It is once we recognise that each of our gifts is integral to building the community that is 'on earth as in heaven', that we understand the call to be active participants, in solidarity with the whole of creation.

This reflection will be shared on the 8th of February, the Feast Day of St Josephine Bakhita and the International Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking. The Society of the Sacred Heart inspires us all to hear God's voice and call in our lives, as we walk with them, in being artisans of hope in a blessed and broken world. To contemplate on the pierced Heart of Jesus is to see the depth of love God holds for those who are afflicted. So today especially, we offer our prayers for those who have suffered the inhumane and violent treatment of trafficking, and let us seek to live lives dedicated to tackling injustice and breaking those cycles of violence wherever we see them.

The seasons are changing and every day, small signs of spring move us out of the darkness of winter. But let us not rush this quiet season, but enter into a deeper silence where we let the Spirit move us to action. As I end this reflection, I invite you to ponder these words by St Madeleine Sophie Barat:

'The Spirit is always speaking to us deep in our hearts, if only we listen to her.'

An invitation to prayer:

Source of all Being, Eternal Word and Holy Spirit, in you we see the perfect example of community, lived out in love. As you dwell in each of us and hold us together as one body, we find life, sustenance and a future. Teach us how to care for all that is entrusted to us, help us to love generously and to give unconditionally. Challenge our complacencies in the face of injustice and call us to action.

Loving God, enable us to see what is possible when all seems impossible and give us hope and joy to keep walking this path together. Amen



'It is always here and now, there is always the present moment to do the very best we can with, and the future depends on the way these moments are spent.' - Janet Erskine Stuart