

We live and die by the moment – we may imagine life simply goes on, and on, and on and what we have to hold on to is this continual flow of never-ending life, characterised by pleasure, if possible, good health, surrounded by those we love and who love us, with a measure of comfort, not least in adequate food and drink. So each day is measured by one's survival according to these conditions. But life is always on the move in quite another sense, built on the death of cells both external and internal and in evolutionary terms necessarily so – death as the fuel for evolutionary change; there is no stasis, no standing still, no days when we can really put a stop to this process of life constructed at the cost of an equivalent destruction – as Teilhard de Chardin has put it. And if we take incarnation seriously and its impeccable correlation between the life of the body and the life of the spirit then this is equally true of our interior life also, or to quote Thomas Aquinas (admittedly at second-hand)

‘We must continue to grow, for “to stand still in the way of God, is to retreat”’  
(Vivian Boland ‘The Spirit of Catholicism’, p83)

Or at least to miss the boat.

This, I think, is what Jesus is warning his disciples in today's gospel passage as he nears his own end on earth as a mortal human being with language couched in the apocalyptic terms of the day but providing the non-apocalyptic hope that this sudden threat of decay and destruction is but a prelude to resurrection. Jerusalem will survive but in quite another form, and more than this our own sacrifices now have to be seen in the context of that greater sacrifice of Christ, given up for us so that we can know that our own failings – not least in the destruction of our own world – are not our ultimate end. But far from this releasing us from the duty and responsibility to love this world, and one another, this makes such love all the more meaningful. What we have and are is affirmed by God as infinitely precious though passing – for why else would God submit his own Son to this process if not to affirm it – that is in a creation made good and in human beings created in God's very image now redeemed by the sinless one – not in order to live bodily again but to live God's life of love in a passing world. Today we especially remember those who have given their lives in a not dissimilar way for the sake of others. Shortly we shall hear the Kohima Epitaph at today's Remembrance Service at All Saints.

When you go home  
tell them of us and say,  
for your tomorrow  
we gave our today.

This would make a fitting epitaph for Cop 26 also. Are we prepared to allow Christ to redeem us in this sense also – that is to allow his sacrifice to become ours for the sake of all God's creation?

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