

Easter Sunday 4A. 26.4.26

The Pope is enjoying something of a renaissance today because his words and actions stand in marked contrast to those of so many world leaders who are increasingly leaving their people to the mercy of others – without a shepherd who shows them loving care. Here's a sample from the Oregon Bay Area Post of June 2025

« We are no longer governed. We are being produced into a reality show. The collapse of American democratic norms has long ceased to be a backroom affair. It operates fully in public view, feeding a constant cycle of spectacle designed for cameras, headlines and social media loops. Governance has become theater and the performance is accelerating.... »

And the consequences are frightening because the real needs of the world and it's people remain unmet : the need to counter climate change, to give security of work and dwelling, to protect not only the widow and orphan but all of us from the effects of an economic model which, in the words of Yanis Varofakis, is asset-stripping us not only of our physical wealth, through privatisation and private equity but now through the unbridled advances of Artificial Intelligence is also asset-stripping us of our minds. And the wars, not unrelated, go on.

Pope Leo, and Jesus, are involved in another type of theatre altogether – when the Catholic convert JD Vance advises the Pope to *« stick to matters of morality »* and to know his theology better the acute irony of it is that this is exactly what the Pope and Jesus are up to – they speak to the heart in parables, in words that could apply to others generally but bring the guilty, the offenders, out into the light by their over-the-top reaction. The Pope and Jesus strike a nerve and violence towards themselves is the result. These are the words and actions of the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. On the first reading of today's parable who the thieves and brigands are who threaten the flock is not immediately obvious, they are unnamed, but their reaction will name them as the religious leaders of the day, concerned not for their people but for their own power and prestige, and their ability to fleece the flock.

The Pope, and Jesus, come that we may have life, and have it to the full – the reference is firstly to eternal life and not necessarily to mend current ills, but without God, without a moral compass, neither life on earth or life in heaven has a chance to flourish.

The sticking point of course is true conversion, for many of our world leaders claim God as on their side, as do many now of our political commentators. The test for all is when their own lives are on the line. It's why the Pope, and Jesus, only need to speak in general terms in parables, it's the Holy Spirit that does the rest, the gift that comes when we realise the depth of Jesus' love for us in his death on the cross, and the total inability we have to resurrect ourselves.

God help us, indeed.

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