

“The Story”: (Blackrock College, Co Dublin). Christmas 2017.)

Mary was, “greatly troubled“, she could have said: “No”... “It is too risky, too much trouble”. Thankfully she said “Yes”... **“And the angel left her,”** Mary continued in the darkness of faith rather than by an angelic light.

“This was the minute no one speaks of, when she could still refuse.

A breath unbreathed, Spirit suspended, waiting ...

Bravest of all humans, consent illumined her

The room filled with its light,

The lily glowed in it, and the iridescent wings,

Consent, courage unparalleled,

opened her utterly.”

- Denise Levertou.

Can I grasp it? Or is there an echo of a lost faith, a cultural inheritance?

“The Story”

... when the story died, Christmas shrivelled. /the Story was a dead crow in a wet field / an abandoned house / a rag on a bush ...

What of the people for whom the story died? They ‘withered’ ... this withering hardly troubled them, and yet there’s an emptiness / spread by the story’s death. This emptiness is in the roads / and in the fields / in mans eyes and children's voices ...”

- Brendan Kennelly

“What was her secret? We can gather it looking again at the scene of the Annunciation. In many paintings Mary is depicted seated before the Angel with a small book. This book is the Scripture. Thus Mary was usually listening to God and dwelling on Him. Her secret was the Word of God: close to her heart, who then took flesh in her womb. By remaining with God, conversing with Him in every circumstance, Mary made her life beautiful. Not appearance, not what passes, but a heart pointed to God is what makes life beautiful. Today we look joyfully at her who was full of grace. Let us ask her to help us to remain young, saying “no” to sin, and to live a beautiful life, saying “yes” to God” -Pope Francis 8 Dec.2017

Have a Blessed Christmas, pass on the Story. Prayer and love. Locky

My story: Back in June I said “Bye! Bye! to Zimbabwe. It was rather sudden with little opportunity to wish friends - “Til we meet again, please God”. I went to Malawi, via Mutare hosted by pal Jack McGrath OCarm, of same village, crossed into Mozambique; John Kingston met me resulting in a few days at his mission near Chimoyo; then by road to Malawi. Gay a dear friend took me in car and hand, ending in a gladsome get together, where John Dimba and my Malawian Brothers asked me to come back among them, It is attractive and inviting and I can understand the reasons, and St Patrick came to mind. Yet like Patrick, I was recycled. Can I notch a third, sorry its a forth?

We had downsized in Zimbabwe from the student residence to a rented house. Sylvester my buddy is there with four students; (most now go to Nairobi) and continues as Rector of the Theology College. I had visions to find a niche and ‘adapt’ to an anticipated different Ireland. I’m here in: Blackrock Spiritan Community, looking out over Dublin bay. My lifestyle is “monkish”, plus: ministry, visits home / friends / walking. And Zimbabwe is also more different, a bloodless coup has a new regime. Looking into 2018, some months of ministry, the Camino and over the Atlantic to fundraise for our efforts in Zim / Malawi.

Recently, John Dimba, now a councillor at our GHQ in Rome, asks that I consider returning to join Sylvester in Zimbabwe. What do I do? I understand why I am being asked. Can I let go of my vision for a niche? Bring it to prayer, to glimpse the meaning. In a hospital where I help with some ministry, a patient mentioned his condition as “a stroke of bad luck”, he was in pain. I replied: “Even in the ‘bad luck’ condition of pain, we can find peace of heart, if we find meaning in it. Try with effort; listening deeply to know that the Lord is present, He is the Source of Meaning, in your heart you will begin to understand.” I know it is a daily task to see it as a life giving word. When it makes no sense, it becomes crucial, because now faith is called for; namely to give thanks even when I lose sight of the Giver. Gratefulness gives us joy. I’ll work on it, lest I become an unhappy robot. In the uncertain clouds of tomorrow, I dimly see a recycled figure touching down in Harare.

I’ll be home for Christmas; 1999 saw me home also, and for the new millennium. Family are well thank God. You recall Joe (bro.) hit his head accident July 2016, he is mobile, is out and about; his speech is improving slowly. Mary, Tom’s wife died in Sept’17...In short, after 30 plus years of prayer to be healed of her alcohol addiction, this past year Mary was diagnosed with cancer and the drink faded ... a story of faith? God’s ways are not ours... a sad ending and a happy one. I was thankful to be able to celebrate the funeral Mass, in which the family participated wonderfully.

Many thanks to so many; priests and confreres for welcome and encouragement, parishioners and friends for your generous support and love, to family and relatives and friends for buckets of TLC. Please find a place in the drawing and don't worry about what to wear. Look at the Baby and ask Him to be born in you and yours.
Hugs and prayer for a Blessed Christmas and New Year.
Locky (Flanagan CSSp).

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