

2nd August 2020

Long

**“When you set out for Ithaka,
ask that your way be long.”**

Constantine Cavafy, Ithaka

I can remember the first time I held Alexander, my elder grandson, in my arms. All the family were there to see the baby. At the appropriate time, after a feed and while the tiny baby was very sleepy, he was passed around so that everyone could “have a shot” holding him. There were “oohs” and “aahs.” Everyone was smiling. The baby was perfect! It was quite delightful. But when he was placed in my arms, he started to scream!

Now, I’m good with babies. I had a reputation as a minister that, at baptisms, I was a calming influence on the most fractious of children. But not this time, and no amount of cuddling and rocking, cooing and singing, made any difference. So I did the sensible thing – I gave him back to his mother, and, instantly, he calmed down. My wife was concerned. “That didn’t go too well,” she said. “Are you OK?” I smiled and replied, “I’m fine. It’s only one moment in what I hope will be a long life and a loving relationship. So, I’ll take the long view, because I’ll always be his grampa.”

It sounds good. But it’s hard, sometimes, to take the long view. Yet, maybe that’s what we need right now as we try to discern where God is, as Church and society emerge from an unexpected crisis. So, I’ll let what follows speak for itself – and for you – as we seek to take a longer view ...

What could be ... a prayer for today

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view. The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision. We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete ... The kingdom always lies beyond us. No statement says all that could be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith ... No pastoral visit brings wholeness. No program accomplishes the church's mission ... This is what we are about. We plant the seeds that one day will grow ... We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well ... We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are ... ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own. Amen. [Attributed to Archbishop Oscar Romero]

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