

30th March 2021 – Tuesday of Holy Week

Justice

**“Whenever a separation is made between liberty and justice,
neither, in my opinion, is safe.”**

Edmund Burke, in a letter to M. de Menonville (1789)

Tuesday derives from the Old English *Tiwesdæg* and Middle English *Tewesday* meaning “Tiw’s Day”. *Tiw* was the god of single combat, and law and justice, in Norse mythology, and equated with Mars and gods of war in other cultures. Tuesday in Latin, therefore, is *dies Martis*. The name *Tiw* derives from words such as *dēya* with meanings such as “shine” and from which we get words like “deity”. So in this Holy Week, I invite you to pause and think before Tuesday slips by unobserved. And, in your thinking, pick out these two words from the background above – “justice” and “shine”.

In 1963, at the height of the Civil Rights movement in the USA, Martin Luther King found himself imprisoned for his peaceful, non-violent protests. In his powerful *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* in which he addresses the moral laxity of his fellow Southern clergy, he quotes the strident words of the prophet Amos (5:24)

*But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.*

But this is not the “Old Testament” justice of power, revenge and punishment. This understanding of justice enshrines the Gospel concepts of loving your neighbour, forgiving seventy times seven and turning the other cheek to your enemy. This is the justice that is the forerunner, not the outworking, of seeking peace. This is *restorative* rather than retributive justice, a healing justice, for the individual, in relationships and within communities. This is the justice, the absolute justice, through which Christ could say, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.” This is the justice through which the love of God should shine.

On this Tuesday of Holy Week, as we go deeper into the final stages of our Lenten pilgrimage, let justice be our watchword. Let righteousness be our focus. Let the deity that is a just and restorative God be with us, so that his love – in all its healing – might shine in us and through us.

A prayer for today

Lord, may I shine with your love because I have justice in my heart. Amen

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