

14th March 2022

Discomfort

“Discomfort guides my tongue.”

William Shakespeare, Othello

Someone asked me last week what I'd given up for Lent. The question drew me up short because, to be honest, I hadn't really given Lent much thought this year. It kind of crept up on me unnoticed, and Ash Wednesday and the first Sunday in Lent slipped by unheralded. As a result, I've not reflected much on Lent in these "Thought for the Day" pieces. So, I thought I'd remedy that today.

I found the piece below in a church magazine. I don't know its origins, so I apologise if I'm breaching copyright. But it enshrines a concept that's central to Lent: it's not about "giving up" things, denying pleasure to ourselves in a Calvinistic, joyless way. But it's about challenge, self-examination, looking hard at who we are and what we stand for. And if as a result our prayers and reflections lead us to discomfort, anger, tears and foolishness, and we are more committed to issues of justice, freedom, alleviating suffering and working for peace, are we not the better for that?

Discomfort can guide our tongue as Shakespeare suggests. If it was also to guide our prayers and actions, might our world not be the better for it – during Lent and well beyond?

The Lenten Blessing – a Franciscan Benediction

May God bless you with Discomfort ...

at easy answers,

half-truths, and superficial relationships,

so that you may live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with Anger ...

*at injustice, oppression and exploitation of people,
so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.*

May God bless you with Tears ...

*to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation and war,
so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them
and turn their pain into joy.*

And may God bless you with enough foolishness...

*to believe that you can make a difference in their world,
so that you can do what others claim cannot be done. Amen*

A prayer for today

Challenge me to change, Lord, and bless me with disturbing things. Amen