

12th April 2022
Tuesday of Holy Week

Whispers

“But if you listen real close, you can hear them whisper their legacy to you. Go on, lean in. Listen, you hear it? – *Carpe* – Hear it? – *Carpe* – ‘*Carpe diem, seize the day boys, make your lives extraordinary.*”

Tom Schulman, Dead Poets Society (spoken by Robin Williams as John Keating)

Today is a day of whispers. In a scene from one of my all-time favourite movies, the radical and eccentric English teacher, John Keating, is teaching his young students to listen. Not for Keating the defining and communicating of perfect knowledge. Learning for his students was not to be an end point, a conclusion to their search for understanding. They had to listen to whispers, take on board what they were hearing and find a truth for themselves that could make their lives extraordinary.

In one of the Lectionary readings for this Tuesday in Holy Week, there's the story in John's Gospel of some Greeks enquiring about Jesus. And before John launches into one of his expansive theological explorations of the meaning of Jesus' presence, he recounts this:

Among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip ... and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

Random tourists had heard about Jesus. Whispers, perhaps? So they asked Philip. And he whispered to Andrew. Then he took Philip and they both whispered to Jesus. Whispers ... a quiet word, a snippet of information, a tentative enquiry. And what does John tell us? Jesus *shouted* a reply! Well, that's how it seems to me, heavy stuff about the hour for the Son of Man to be glorified, a troubled soul and death. Really? Might Jesus not have sat down with his "whispering" enquirers to share more gently with them?

The older I get, the less I'm enamoured with the stridency and heaviness of faith. I don't need to be shouted at. I don't need to be weighed down with theology's complications. I need to be more aware of whispers, gentle voices of wisdom, little glimmers of light, tiny moments of truth. It may not mean I "seize the day" that makes my life extraordinary. But I can take heed of whispers and let that be enough for now.

A prayer for today

"Lord, you sometimes speak in whispers, still and small and scarcely heard. Only those who want to listen catch the all-important word." (Christopher Idle)