

7th April 2022

Slow

“We can allow for Slow Medicine beds in our hospitals so that doctors have enough time to find out what is really wrong with a patient, and patients have enough time to heal.”

Victoria Sweet, Slow Medicine: The way to healing

As I write this, the destruction of the major cities of Ukraine is still happening, though there are some signs of a de-escalation of the invasion. Face-to-face Peace Talks, which had been suspended for two weeks, have resumed. Intermediaries are working hard to bring the two sides together. Our prayers are for a resolution very soon.

But it's slow. Peace Talks are slow. Reconciliation is slow. Seeing an end to destruction is slow. Too slow? Of course, especially when innocent people continue to bear the cost of war. But within that slowness, there are tentative, flickering signs that people are listening to each other. It may be slow, but it's still moving. It may be slow, but the fact that there is the willingness to listen has to be seen as positive.

I came across a book called *Slow Medicine: The way to healing*, by an American physician, medical historian and author, Victoria Sweet. She promotes the practice of “slow medicine”, and offers this insight:

The essence of Medicine is story – finding the right story, understanding the true story, being unsatisfied with a story that does not make sense. Healthcare, on the other hand, deconstructs story into thousands of tiny pieces – pages of boxes and check marks for which no one is responsible.

The same can be said for all pastoral care. And it's equally true – and, perhaps, most profoundly so – in hospice chaplaincy. When so much of our care is determined by outcomes, tick-boxes, instant and measurable conclusions, might more healing be possible if our care is founded on listening? “The essence ... is story”. If that is true, then true wholeness will only be achieved when the story is allowed to be told in an environment of listening and understanding. And that takes time ...

Slow medicine, and slow Peace Talks? Too slow for many of us, for sure. And yet, if listening to the story that needs to be told is the beginning of understanding, then peace and wholeness will surely follow – perhaps more quickly than we might expect.

A prayer for today

Lord, your story is headed, “Love”. Let my story be headed, “Yes, please!” Amen

An original reflection by @ Tom Gordon

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