

7th June 2024

Steadfast

“Cauri tumsac labirintam ved gaismac pavediens.”

“Through the labyrinth of darkness leads a thread of light.”

The Latvian Museum of Occupation, *Exhibit Information Board*

My daughter was on a city-break with friends to Riga, Latvia’s capital, where she visited the “Latvian Museum of Occupation”, dedicated to the history of the oppression of the country and its people during the German National Socialist and Soviet regimes from 1940 to 1991. It was a visit that was as powerful as it was interesting for her. She sent us two quotes.

The first, included above, is unattributed, but it’s remained in my mind during our Golden Wedding events. While we celebrate, others struggle. While we give thanks, others are caught in a labyrinth of distress. While we laugh, others cry. So what do we offer? We pause our rejoicing to remember those less fortunate than we are. And we affirm a belief that for them, as for us, a thread of light *will* come, to offer peace, hope, love, life, freedom – whatever their heart desires. The darkness will not win.

The second is from a Latvian journalist and poet, Knuts Skujenieks, who spent years in prison in the 1960s for “anti-Soviet activities”. He wrote:

*Neraudāt par to kas bijis.
Nebīties par to kas rīt.
Tikai saudzīgi un droši
savu vagu taisnu dzīt.*

Do not shed your tears for yesterday.
Do not fear what comes tomorrow.
Just in a steadfast, measured way,
plough your furrow – straight and narrow.

I know neither the source nor the context of these words. But it matters not. For they are universal, applicable as much to my country as to Latvia, to me as to Knuts Skujenieks, to my marriage as to any relationship, to a writer pushing seventy-five as to a new-born child. Yesterday has gone. It’s not worth our tears. Tomorrow may be uncertain, but we can face it without fear. But today? I’ll plough the furrow that I’m given to plough, and seek to be steadfast, and measured, and straight.

A prayer for today

*May God guide your hand today as you take your plough,
and keep your furrow straight and true.*