



Allocutio



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Allocutio: Fickleness

People are fickle. Indeed we are all fickle. This truth can be found in any historical document, in many places in the Bible, in the lives of the saints even and finally in an honest examination of your own conscience.

How often in the Gospels do we encounter total changes of mood! The people of Nazareth impressed by Jesus and next they want to throw him off the cliff their town was built on; one evening after he had fed them they want to make him King but by the next evening after his sermon on the Bread of Life they abandon him in droves; one Sunday they welcome him with palms into Jerusalem but before that week is out they holler for his execution.

One of the greatest examples of fickleness in history had to be the time a mob descended on the Palace of Versailles to lynch Queen Marie Antoinette. When she came out to the crowd there were some children with her. She said, "This is not for children to see. Let me take them away and I'll be back. When she returned the crowd shouted "Vive la Reine! Long Live the Queen!" They had completely changed their mood.

Actually it was great to see today and article of some journalist guy taking the media to task over how they have treated Bishop Brennan. The Murphy case mentions him in one case which the report says was handled right and just because he is named the media howl for his head.

But don't for one second think that it is them out there. No it is you and I! It is part of our downside. Do we too not go with the herd sometimes, swinging into the popular mood, orchestrated by the media around some event? We need not think that we would have stood back in Germany from the crowds who drove over the cliffs of abyss with Hitler.

But Jesus didn't go over the cliff. With him we are called to be different people. Oh yes we will be tempted to go with the popular. Or like Peter we may seek to avoid the call to go the way of Jesus which leads to suffering. Like the Apostles we want to go with Jesus. We do not want to go with current fashion or thinking but out of fear or out of insecurity we can keep quiet.

There is only one way to be your own man and not to be fickle and that is to be with Christ. Yes, we are looking for hope; yes, we are looking for heaven and so when something special happens, something that seems to herald a new way, brightness, happiness and peace we hope this is it. But we must be beware of Christ's own warning that some will come saying "I am he" or "Here is the Kingdom". And what did Christ say: "Don't go after them". And those who put their hopes that this at last may be he or that this may be the Kingdom can only end up depressed. Those who are solid in Christ will overcome all this turbulence.

I'm always impressed by those who are monks or contemplatives. Their calmness and solidity can be striking. I heard recently of a community of friars somewhere in England who suffered a blast one night from an IRA bomb. Windows shattered, debris all over the place. And a young student ran to the prior's room and knocked him up. He came out with his dressing gown about him to hear the panic. He then asked, "Anyone killed?" "No". "Anyone



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injured?" "No". "Are the police and fire brigade here?" "Yes" "Well then, I'm going back to sleep and you should go to bed too. We'll deal with the rest in the morning!"

Sometimes people come to me and tell me this that and the other. And I ask myself, "Is it really for my concern? Is it worth the excitement? And even if it is important is it my business anyway? And has it any bearing on what I have to do?" And often the honest answer is "No." So I just go back to my business.

Another problem associated with the mood of the moment is the lynch mob. In the past the lynch mod got a rope and found a stout branch on a tree. But nowadays you ring a chat show or slip information to a journalist. And in a few hours a person's character or ministerial post is destroyed.

Unless we come to Christ we will be part of such a world. How does Christ help us? He gives us great values, like truth, like compassion, like not being judgmental. And Christ gives us the great beacon of charity to guide us soundly. Charity must be part and parcel of the person who is not swayed by the winds of the moment. Charity prevents us deifying anyone and also prevents us from demonising them. Charity will be part of the calm balanced person. Like Christ we know that no one is perfect. We won't be surprised if they fall but we won't condemn them either. And we will pick them up and help them to continue to nurture their gifts. We should never rubbish anyone for making mistakes.

When the people of Nazareth wished to throw Jesus over the cliff it may have been that they wanted to throw him into their rubbish pit. We belong to their camp everytime we want to rubbish someone else. Charity calls us always to look again. In fact if we can only reach that calm place in prayer to look at things and see them more balanced we might judge and act better. That is the proven viewing point on reality: in prayer with Christ.

I would finally like to give you this quote from Cardinal Nguyen Van Thuan of Vietnam who was imprisoned for thirteen years by the communists. He suffered an awful lot in prison but just listen to this. "Many times I have suffered interiorly because the media wants to hear me tell sensationalist stories, to accuse, to denounce, to incite opposition, revenge . . . This is not my goal. My greatest desire is to transmit a message of love, in serenity and truth, in forgiveness and reconciliation. I want to share with you my experiences: how I found Jesus in every moment of my daily life, in discerning between God and the works of God, in prayer, in the Eucharist, in my brothers and sisters, in the Blessed Virgin Mary who was my guide along the way. . . " Amen.

Fr Paul Churchill