

Reflection for Holy Tuesday 2020

We all know the seven deadly sins, but we all have our personal views on which sins we find most tempting, and I bet that some of you, like me, would like to add some more favourites to that list. My favourite addition would be procrastination. I can't seem to stop myself falling into this one. Will I get this reflection prepared in time? The temptation to leave things to the last minute sometimes seems too strong to resist.

Which brings me to deadlines... rather an uncomfortable word in our current circumstances, but grimly relevant to the events of Holy Week, as well as to our own situation. Worrying about deadlines and procrastination seem to go hand in hand.

Jesus faced a very real and very nasty deadline at the end of Holy Week. But the Gospels make it clear that, rather than procrastinate, He got a huge amount done in the space of just five days, including a lot of teaching, between His triumphant entry into Jerusalem and death on the Cross. In the Orthodox Church they call Holy Tuesday "Great Tuesday", and their main Gospel reading that day is a long passage from Matthew's Gospel from 24:36 to 26:2, in which Jesus is teaching the disciples on the Mount of Olives, including two great parables: The Parable of the Ten Virgins and the Parable of the Talents; and much else besides.

We all face deadlines, including the ultimate deadline. We don't know when we will have to face ours. The current Covid-19 crisis adds yet more uncertainty, bringing with it the possibility that our end may be sooner than we thought. At the beginning of the passage from Matthew's Gospel Jesus says "No-one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

Jesus makes it clear in his Holy Tuesday teachings that we need to be vigilant, but we should not be paralysed by fear; and we should not over-think the situation either. We would all like to aim consciously to practice the seven heavenly virtues, but as Paul makes clear in today's reading from Corinthians (1 Corinthians 1:18–31), we should let God work through us, because without God's wisdom we are bound to be foolish.

So, let's try not to worry too much about the ultimate deadline, but get on with the task of following Christ in our lives, be they short or long.

Today the St Mary's church choir were going to have their final rehearsal for Good Friday's musical devotions. Here is one of the pieces we were going to sing, a favourite of mine and of several in the choir. The words, from John 3:16, are well-known and I hope they comfort you as much as they do me. [Add link to a YouTube performance of Chilcott's version of 'God so loved the world']