****

**REFLECTION TOO MUCH EXCESS!**

Comedian and sometime quirky social commentator H G Nelson had as one of his mantras: “When too much fun is never enough”. In his own way he was taking the mickey out of a restless culture that is never satisfied with what it has. The longing for what is around the next corner shapes so much of our society and we all run the risk of taking it as a given.

The boot’s been on the other foot these past months as this restless culture has been subjected to the restlessness of nature with its own version of excess

Huge bushfires, some lasting for 174 and 204 days among many others, gave us a fearsome taste of nature’s own excess. There were lives lost, properties destroyed, communities decimated and wildlife destroyed by the unimaginable power of the raging fires.

Smoke covered Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney, Brisbane and parts in-between, causing health concerns and making life very uncomfortable even for people not involved directly in battling the fires. Nature’s excess made us all shrink in size!

Then came the longed-for rain, not in gentle showers but in the form of “catastrophic” wind and storms. It filled up our dams, flooded our neighbourhoods and disrupted our power supplies. Once again nature’s excessive force had its way with us.

While grateful for the rain, we didn’t enjoy the excessive power of nature much which rendered us powerless and out of control. Nature’s expressions of excess didn’t sit well with us. We didn’t own or control them and we were not comfortable.

In times more normal for us, we are in the driver’s seat and we are the ones who develop our own culture of excess. We think of this as good and satisfactory and sometimes with little thought for the consequences.

One woman writer whose name escapes me, recently noted that if everyone lived at the standard that she was enjoying, we would four and a half earths.

Just as we felt overwhelmed by the fire, smoke and storms, we can well imagine how most people in the world feel when they look at our wealth and our “lifestyle” as we like to call it. Our excessive wealth creates confusion, fear, envy and a feeling of powerlessness from which there seems no escape.

Before we bash ourselves up too much about this, the world has probably always been pretty much this way.

Here are a couple of great saints from the early Church to bring our reflection to a close:

*"The bread in your cupboard belongs to the hungry man, the coat hanging unused in your closet belongs to the man who needs it; the shoes rotting in your closet belong to the man who has no shoes, the money which you put in the bank belongs to the poor. You do wrong to everyone you could help but fail to help.* ***St. Basil, 330-379***

*"Do you wish to honour the body of Christ? Do not despise him when he is naked. Do not honour him here in the church building with silks, only to neglect him outside, when he is suffering from cold and from nakedness. For he who said, 'This is my Body' is the same who said 'you saw me, a hungry man, and you did not give me to eat'. Of what use is it to load the table of Christ? Feed the hungry and then come and decorate the table. You are making a golden chalice and you do not give a cup of cold water? The Temple of your afflicted brother's body is more precious than this temple. (The church building). The Body of Christ becomes for you an altar. It is more holy than the altar of stone on which you celebrate the holy sacrifice. You are able to contemplate this altar everywhere, in the markets and in the open squares."* ***St. John Chrysostom, 349-407***

May our excess be one of love, justice and abundant grace.

Father Kevin

Feb 23, 2020