

White Ribbon Day

Last Friday was “White Ribbon Day” and with the profusion of “ribbon days” currently in vogue, you could be forgiven for not knowing what the white ribbon stands for. (At this rate we are going to run out of colours to prick our collective consciences.) But “White Ribbon Day” is something close to my heart. It’s there reminding men to do something about our considerable contribution to domestic violence.

Some forty years ago, when I first began working as a social worker, our society was slowly becoming aware of the impact of domestic violence upon women and children. Women’s Refuges sprang up all through the seventies, with women mobilising against the violence that was directed towards them and their children. It was only in the 1970’s that child abuse began to be taken seriously by government. And here we are forty years later still struggling with the levels of violence in our homes. There is a lot of anger about in our society and much of it is channelled into domestic situations.

And you have to wonder if much of our contemporary anger and violence has its roots in the irrational sense of entitlement that is promoted in contemporary society – the sense that I am owed a good life, my life should be free from pain and suffering, set-backs and disappointments. And of course nothing could be further from the truth. Pain, suffering, set-backs and disappointments are part and parcel of all our lives.

This urban myth of a trouble free life is fuelled in part by an advertising media that trumpets happiness and well-adjusted families provided for by trouble-free mod-cons. And if it does not happen it must be someone’s fault. So we look around for someone to blame and for some it is those closest to us – our families, our parents, the government, or even God.

But **As I see It**, violence always stems from deep within ourselves. In a society that encourages the restlessness born of envy, we will always be reaching for the stars, which is of itself no bad thing. But for some, the stars are too far. Thus is born disappointment and frustration, and it is this disappointment and frustration that can lead to violence, much of which is like a child throwing a tantrum when he cannot get his own way. As followers of the Christ we are encouraged to see all we have as a gift from God. Entitlement for a Christian is a dirty word. **All is grace!** So let me finish with a poem from an unknown Confederate soldier who had more than his fill of violence.

***I asked for strength that I might achieve;
I was made weak that I might learn to humbly obey.
I asked for health that I might do greater things;
I was given infirmity that I might do better things.
I asked for riches that I might be happy;
I was given poverty that I might be wise.
I asked for power that I might have the praise of men;
I was given weakness that I might feel the need of God.
I asked for all things that I might enjoy life;
I was given life that I might enjoy all things.
I got nothing that I asked for,
but everything I hoped for.
Almost despite myself my unspoken prayers were answered;
I am among all men most richly blessed.***

Tony would be more than happy to chat about the above article.

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