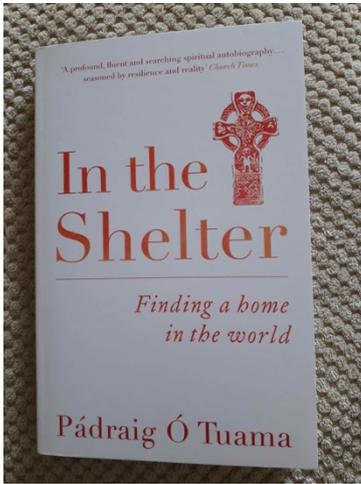


Thought for the Day: 11-17 May 2020

(by Rachel Stewart)



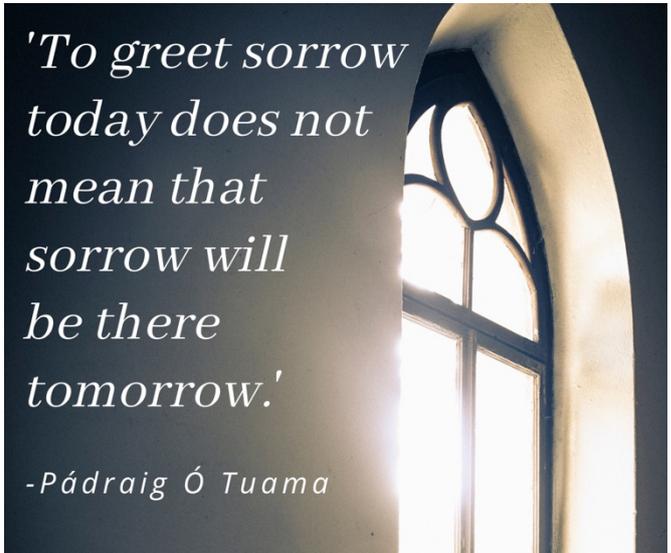
Introduction

This week I will mention Pádraig Ó Tuama a few times, so I'll begin with an introduction: he's Irish, writer of breath-taking poetry, theologian and mediator. From 2014-2019 he led the Corrymeela Community, Ireland's oldest peace and reconciliation organisation. You can follow him on Twitter: @duanalla. I recently started reading one of his books 'In the Shelter: Finding a Home in the World'.

Monday - Hello to here. Hello to grief.

On 26 February this year my dad died not long after being diagnosed with lung cancer. His funeral was on 13 March (thankfully, just before lockdown). I didn't really grieve at the time, it was mid-school term and I was hanging on for the Easter break. Baking on Easter morning, listening to a talk by Pádraig Ó Tuama, I discovered the power of recognising and naming moments and feelings, no matter how terrible. Pádraig's words were full of kindness and grace. They enabled me to let go.

'It has taken years to continue to live into the truth that if I believe we are from God, then we are from Goodness and for Goodness. To greet sorrow today does not mean that sorrow will be there tomorrow. Happiness comes, too, and grief, and tiredness, disappointment, surprise and energy. Chaos and fulfilment will be named as well as delight and despair. This is the



'To greet sorrow today does not mean that sorrow will be there tomorrow.'

-Pádraig Ó Tuama

truth of being here, wherever here is today. It may not be permanent but it is here. I will probably leave here, and I will probably return. To deny here is to harrow the heart. Hello to here.' **Pádraig Ó Tuama**

I cried as I rubbed butter into flour; the release of grief. Hello to grief.

Tuesday - Hello to fury. Hello to light.

Recently, after receiving news of a sudden and tragic death, I had to acknowledge the grief, anger, disappointment and fear that ripped through my heart. I was SO angry at God. While sitting quietly with Alan during evening prayer, my mind raged and hurled thoughts at God. Hello to fury.



The next morning I was still raging so I wrote a poem; a lament. As I reached the end of my lament I saw in my mind's eye Jesus standing in front of me, ironically given social distancing; about 2 metres away. Distant but present. He was listening, absorbing, waiting, allowing, and not judging. His presence amidst my fury brought some peace.

'The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.'
(John 1. 5)

Hello to light.

Wednesday - Hello to fear. Hello to courage.

I'm sure there have been moments over the last couple of months when we have all experienced a flash of fear. The fear of sickness. The fear of dying. The fear of death. The fear of losing a loved one. The fear of

loneliness. The fear of boredom. The fear of being locked in, not just to our homes but into our selves. The fear of unknowing. The fear of time passing and opportunities missed. The fear of people who are reckless in their walking (too close, step away!). Hello to fear.

'It occurs to me that courage comes from the same place as fear, and where there is fear there is the possibility of courage.' **Pádraig Ó Tuama**

'About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?")

Hello to fear. Hello to courage.

Dear Lord Jesus, help us to recognise the fear that is within our thoughts, that steals our sleep, that unsettles our quiet times. May we have courage enough to speak our fears that they may grow smaller and not bigger. That you may bring your light and your company even into the places that are dark within us. Amen.



Thursday - Hello to challenge.

I have realised that I cope with the downs of life by comparing my 'down' to something worse. On challenging days at work I often say to people, 'We could be living in Syria...', and I mean it. Perspective is everything. During lockdown I have been watching a number of dark detective series on Netflix. Comparing lockdown life to the end that is met by the victims makes it easy to feel grateful! However, at the back of my mind floats these words of Paul...

'Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.'

Help us, God, in the midst of 'here', to search out the true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy things to focus on. Amen



And I wonder if God is asking something of me. Hello to challenge. So, help us God, in the midst of 'here', to search out the true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy things to focus on. Amen

Friday - Hello to you.

During lent I missed the sermon about tying knots in string to hold in mind the people that we find difficult to love, but I do sometimes feel the need to pray that God would help me to see someone as he sees them. To really see them. In the talk that I listened to on Easter morning, Pádraig Ó Tuama described a greeting he experienced in Ghana. Instead of saying, 'Hello' one person says, 'You are here' and the other responds, 'Yes, I am here.' In response, I scribbled a reflection to this, which I now use as a sort of mindfulness exercise, imagining that I am meeting the person I find difficult to love.

You are here.

I see you.

I acknowledge you.

You are worthy to be seen.

Worthy to be here.

I don't walk past you,
pretending I can't see you.

I face you.

And I see you.

I acknowledge your presence.

You are here.

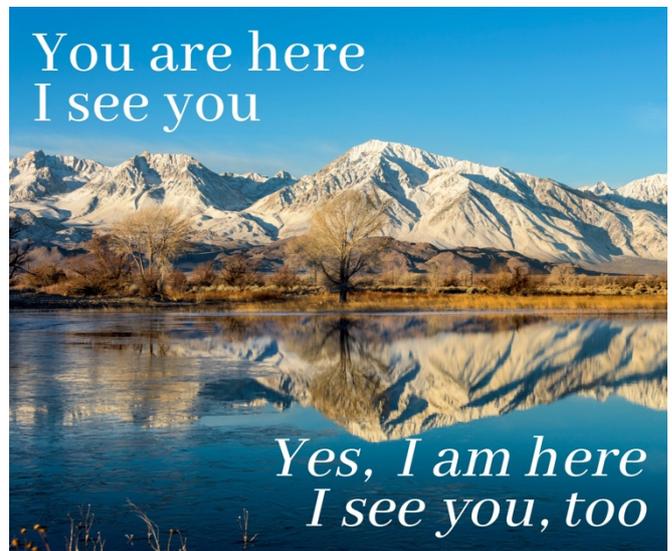
You are meant to be here.

You are here.

Yes, I am here.

I see you, too.

I receive your greeting.
I accept that I am worthy to be seen.
Worthy to be here.
I notice that you don't walk past me,
Pretending that you can't see me.
So I face you.
And I see you.
I acknowledge your presence.
We are here.
We are meant to be here.
We are here.



Saturday - Hello to joy.

Like every Thursday evening of late, this week our neighbours gathered distantly, to clap and cheer for the NHS, for all that care, and for all that is good in the world. It was delightful to see our neighbour's children dancing and prancing around in their pyjamas while bashing pans. How lovely to be able to yell greetings across invisible partitions and to wave madly to our friends at the other end of the Close. The sun was shining; someone drove past beeping their horn repeatedly in solidarity with the clappers, there was a feeling of lightness and joy in the air. Hello to joy.

As we bounced back into our house, the words of 'Lord of the Dance' came to mind:

Dance, then, wherever you may be,
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,
And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,
And I'll lead you all in the Dance,
said he.



Lord, thank you for moments of joy. Thank you for all that IS good and wonderful in this world. Jesus, thank you for who you are and for all that you have done for us. Amen.

Sunday - Hello to being blessed and blessing others.

A pandemic blessing written by @GraceREThomas, which I discovered on Twitter:

Whether zooming, recording, or live on the air
In suits, robes or mufti, with your new 'lockdown hair'
Whether talking to people on the web or the phone
Or reading the Bible, or praying alone
Whether serving the hungry, the homeless, the poor
Or shielding, unable to go out anymore
Doing all of the above, or a combo of some
Or things yet unmentioned, but known to the One
If you yearn to do more, and feel helpless and lost
If the grief seems too much, at this time of deep cost
If you're anxious about what the future may bode
Or you're tired, and balancing a challenging load
May the songs of creation be a balm for this place
May colours of spring bring you glimpses of grace
And may the Creator, whose love will never cease
Surround you, sustain you, uplift and give peace. Amen.

