

A Lenten Reflection

“But the future is, most of all, is in the hands of those people who recognize the other as “you” and themselves as a part of an “us.” We all need each other.” -[Pope St. Francis](#)

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Hope is a seed that we can plant that grows into a tree.

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Today, the weight of people suffocates me.

Tomorrow, it squanders the seed I was planning to plant.

I asked a friend, do you ever feel like it's so hard to be alive?

That feels cynical, and I don't mean it that way.

It's so difficult to protect that seed, to believe it will grow into a tree.

It is the act of being alive, but it is nonetheless an exhausting, never-ending, daily task towards

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God commands us to love our neighbors as ourselves,

To protect what they're planting, nourishing, bringing into the world,

But it is an ugly job.

Other people can be disgusting, distasteful, disturbing.

We must see the spark in them that also,

Struggles to be alive.

To empathize with their suffocation.

That spark is the commonality.

This is all to say, that

A domani can look grim, can look hopeful, can look beautiful and disdainful, all at once.

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The seed we plant today will have changed by tomorrow, but

Someone else might recognize it better than we can ourselves, and

That is why the people that are hard to see, hard to talk to, hard to hope for,

Have to be found.

Have to be loved.

Have to be ours.

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Lend, do not expect debtors to repay you.

Do not expect enemies to be kind to you.

But, give more than you take.

Actually, while we are at it,

Seek out those you do not like, absorb what they offer.

Do not judge. Do not condemn.

Forgive.

Give.

Beyond giving.

Embrace.

Adhere, do not abhor.

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“Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” (Luke 6: 38)

There is a scale that appears in my mind's eye when a deed is done,
a debt incurred,
an injustice served,
a compliment paid.
It must always be even.
I think of Marcel Mauss's essay on The Gift.
Is a gift really ever free?
The deeds must always be equaled out in my mind.

But, God calls us to a different kind of structure of living.
One that does not include an accounting sheet of checks and balances.
He/She/It calls us into a more fluid life in which our deeds must always pour out of us with no expectancy for return.
As humans, we must deliver pieces of our soul into one another,
into the river of life,
no matter the circumstances.
Good deeds answered by more good deeds, judgements of wrong-doings answered still with good deeds –
pouring out of us so that a flood of good will overflow and lift our bodies from the earth.
With love we grow, with hate we sink.
Match love with love, and hate with more love, it says.
Pour out and it will pour in, God says.