

The words that matter

At the beginning of May I became suddenly deaf in one ear. I was locked in my own world and it was frightening. Sounds from the other ear either became too loud, muffled or distorted. When I rang for medical advice, the doctor asked me to come to the surgery immediately and greeted me dressed as a 'Spaceman' handing me gloves and a mask. I was referred to the hospital but I have to wait for the first clinic back in a few weeks. It was difficult to accept the loss of hearing. I have to focus more on the words that matter instead of letting them pass over me. My husband is a love and great support. He has put subtitles on the TV which relieve the pressure of trying to make out words, repeats things patiently and we laugh at the funny misheard conversations. I have printed off the readings for mass and find it better to read them quietly and just pick out a phrase that I can hear again and again in my head all day to live out. A reading that really struck me last week was about being pruned.



As a 'gardener' the image is always special to me. I love my roses and it always feels brutal pruning them to look like cruel, menacing sticks with thorns. One of my roses has been providing beautiful, heavenly scented blooms for weeks now. I know that I keep needing to be pruned to really hear what is important. I need to be grafted on that vine. I cannot hear as I would like to be able to, but I have a loudspeaker in my head of the words that I need to hear.

Making Peace

Having experienced virus symptoms 10 weeks ago I have been self-isolating since, only going out for exercise and fresh air in the park close by me. Just recently I ventured out to a nearby corner shop for a few items, wearing a mask and gloves to protect myself, feeling quite nervous. It went well to begin with, as there was only one other customer. This gave me an opportunity to connect with the shop owner. She is a Muslim and was fasting during Ramadan. It was a moment to listen and make unity with her as she spoke of the lockdown impact on them having to self-isolate during a period when family togetherness is paramount. As I was going out of the shop doorway a young man barged in without stopping, not waiting for me to leave, passing right up close as he continued talking on his mobile phone as if I was invisible. I felt exposed and shocked that, given all the rules he could behave so thoughtlessly and disrespectfully. There was a mumbled word "sorry" but his whole manner was dismissive. I reacted with anger and said his behaviour was unacceptable which brought on a tirade of angry retorts. It became a heated exchange... a stand-off. I should have left the shop then but began to feel such a lack of peace in my heart. It was the week of promoting and standing for peace... I felt the Holy Spirit prompting me to try and redeem the situation. Then a new perspective entered. I received the grace to see him through a different lens.



Barging in had not been deliberate, it was a careless and unthinking action. Only love and forgiveness can change behaviour. So, with the help of the Holy Spirit and against all my inclinations I was able to step outside of my judgemental attitude and seek a way to re-connect with this young man. I moved a bit in his direction and said "Look, let's make peace, shall we?" His defensive attitude changed immediately, I saw surprise and a willingness to do this. He responded with a "yes" and then a gesture of social isolation greeting by putting his foot out to shake on it...lock down style! I reciprocated with my foot and as I left, I saw a smile not only on his face but also on the face of the shopkeeper. Peace was restored and I felt happier leaving.