

July 2004

Bridges V

A meditation on light and darkness

I have been wanting to acquaint you with the writings of the Czech advocate of human rights whose essays were the focus of my translating activities for a number of months. However, I did not have a clear sense of how to do until my eyes were drawn to some verses from the gospel of John that are printed on a calendar given to me by a young Czech friend.

“In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:4-5 NRSV).

I looked at the light that was penetrating the grey backdrop of the cave depicted on the calendar, and I felt the warm sunshine that was flooding the apartment, which has become home to John and me.

“In him was life.” In truth! I thought. Nevertheless, images of terror and terrorists, bombings and explosions, kidnappings and torture, oppression and vengeance flooded my mind, and I found myself considering the gospel’s affirmation of light in terms of shattering peace and shattered lives. In our troubled world, who could reasonably declare that “the light shine in the darkness” and who could reasonably dare to hope that “the darkness will not overcome the light?”

The questions seem bleak, but in other dark ages, people of faith have spoken words of life, and the darkness has not prevailed. The light has not been overcome thanks to messengers whose graceful examples have shown our shadowy world a more gentle way. The light has not been extinguished by darkness thanks to inspiring messengers like Božena Komárková, who reminds us how necessary words of life are when she says: “Evil, as the outgrowth of human guilt vis-à-vis God and thus vis-à-vis humankind, complicates the tableau of the Christian world” (*Ve Světě...*, 123).

Komárková assures us that affirmations of light and life are possible because “Christ’s resurrection defies our fear of the end of existence” (paraphrase, *Ve Světě...*, 122). And, Komárková reveals that words of light and life are reconciling when she writes: “Through Christ’s sacrifice, which put him in solidarity with humankind and the world..., our responsibility for our brother...and for everyone who does not know about God’s grace has been set forth (*Ve Světě*, 122).

Božena Komárková’s words serve as light to our world’s darkness because they were written during a time that was equally as tortured as these days are. You see, Komárková survived internment by the Nazis, only to spend the rest of her life under constant surveillance by communist leaders who were threatened by her advocacy of human rights. Thus, Komárková’s affirmations of the light that shines in the darkness are more than superficial daydreams. Komárková speaks from within the heart of darkness, so a compelling integrity seems to characterize statements about love and mercy like the one where she declares.

The body, which the Son of God accepted, is not only a confirmation of God’s love for humankind and the source of human hope; it is also an affirmation of all created

reality.... This is why everything that exists has value and is very good.... This is why it is acceptable to love the world and its gifts: because they are God's gifts. And God's love, which has created everything, is so great that neither sin nor death can take it away from the human being. (*Ve Světě*, 122)

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it because you know what it means to stand in solidarity with human beings in this world—seeing other persons not “as a product of nature and history, but as beings created in the image of God.” (*Ve Světě*,..., 123)

You know what it means to assume responsibility for your brother—not “as a lost cosmic or social atom, but as a being whom God has called by his own name.” (*Ve Světě*..., 122)

You know what it means to stand with those who do not yet know God's grace until they gain a sense of “freedom whose measure is not the infinity of the universe, but the love of Christ.” (*Ve Světě*..., 123)

May the light that is life itself continue to shine by the grace of God.

Joyce Michael

The 2004 Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study, p. 337