

...BRIDGES... Number 3, 2007: Revisiting Holy Week

on behalf of the ECCB's American Working Group and PC(USA)'s Czech Mission Network by Joyce Michael

As I write these words, Holy Week has just begun, and appropriately enough, I am immersed in ways that the Christian tradition has interpreted the significance of Christ's death across the centuries. As I continue to translate Jakub Trojan's analysis of this matter, I am becoming aware of deeply-engrained assumptions that informed my approach to the themes of Holy Week when I was a parish pastor. Dr. Trojan's articulation of some of the incongruous implications of such presuppositions suggests that my attempts to wrestle with the shadows of Holy Week may have unwittingly made it appear as if God himself became "an accomplice in a crime" when "he sacrificed the one whom...he declared to be his beloved Son at the baptism in the Jordan" (*Jesus' Story*, 149). Suffice it to say that thanks to Professor Trojan's insightful reflections, I am living close to the paradox of the cross these days.

Therefore, I was recently drawn to take a new look at two poems which Moderator Emeritus, Pavel Smetana, asked me to translate for Easter, 2004. I considered that request to be an honor because working with Rev. Smetana's Christmas poems had become a meaningful experience for me. Yet, although I eagerly tried to complete that project, I never sent the "finished product" to Rev. Smetana. I simply did not think that I had adequately captured the sense of the more pensive of the two poems. Yet, the time seems to have come for me to attempt this task again. I have a feeling that my work with Dr. Trojan's book will enable me to arrive at a more appropriate rendering of the poem that is entitled

Remember, Lord by Pavel Smetana

My Lord,
remember your mercy;
although I have immersed my sins
in a sea of oblivion.

Remember your suffering,
not the pain
which I have caused my neighbors.

Lord, remember your desolation,
and yet, forget
that I did not find time for the desolate.

Remember your sacrifice of love,
and forgive the destitute heart,
which refuses to love its neighbor.

Remember, Lord, the sinner
who is crying out to you
and by your mercy, open to him
the gate of eternal salvation.

As I typed this, it occurred to me that poets often have a profound sense of the themes of Holy Week. Thus, I want to conclude this BRIDGES with a poem by a Czechoslovak pastor. Some of you found this verse to be quite meaningful when John and I shared it during our itineration in 2006.

Beyond Myself by Milan Jurčo

We believe,
Within the limits of reason,
We pray,
Within the limits of our will,
We love,
Within the limits of our pain,
We submit,
Within the limits of opinion,
We use our talents,
Within the limits of assured position,
We forgive,
Within the limits of our patience,
We want the gifts of the Holy Spirit
Within the limits of our own standards.

For ages,
We have set limits;
For ages, given orders
As to the way the faithful should go.

O Lord,
Help me go beyond my limitations
And live in Your space,
The space of Your will,
The space of freedom from one's self;
The space of happiness for the soul.
The space
Of a different measure of worth:
The space of the cross of Golgotha.