

Moravian Women's Association- Devotional Paper – March 2024

Fruits of the Spirit

*But the Spirit produces **love**, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23a GNB)*

Many hundreds of years ago, a poor, uneducated girl called Pepita had been hired as a model for an artist. This artist had painted many pictures for monasteries, some of which depicted the crucifixion. The story goes that Pepita was drawn to one such picture and asked the artist who the suffering man was. When she heard the story of Christ's sufferings and crucifixion, Pepita is said to have been moved to tears and to say to the artist; "You must love Him very much as He has done so much for you. What have you done for Him?" In response the artist decided to paint a great picture of Christ. He painted what is known as an Ecce Homo. Ecce Homo is the Latin for "Behold the man" – the words Pilate used when he presented a tortured Christ to the crowds prior to the crucifixion. Below the painting the artist wrote the question which Pepita had asked of him. "This have I done for thee. What hast thou done for Me?" Two hundred years after it had been painted, the picture was hanging in a gallery in Dusseldorf. A young Count Zinzendorf stood before it and determined to serve Christ. He, of course, became the founder of the renewed Moravian Church. In part, the reason, why we are here today reading this paper.

It is certainly true, that Zinzendorf was deeply affected and inspired by an "Ecce Homo" picture painted by Domenico Feti. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that the story of Pepita is true. However, the point of both stories is that God's love for humans is so great that through His Son, Jesus, he was prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice. This sacrifice should provoke in us a thankfulness that we commit our lives to Him.

I had decided some months ago that I would focus on "love" for March's devotional paper as Easter Sunday is quite early this year and falls at the very end of March. However, as I went about my life in December, I began to wonder if I should have chosen to write about "love" for the December/January paper. Many of our Christmas carols celebrate the fact that when Jesus was born, a special sort of love came into the world. But of course, we can only recognise this love coming into the world when we have heard the story of Easter. It is only after the events of Easter have taken place that we realise just how much Jesus loved humanity.

Here is the image that Zinzendorf gazed upon – you can just see the words the artist wrote below the painting. They are in Latin but translate as written earlier in this paper.



Discussion

1. Do you think we are as affected by the story of Christ's torture and crucifixion as Pepita and Zinzendorf were?
2. Do you have any examples of music (including hymns), stories, film, art works which have provoked in you a personal realisation of what Christ's sacrifice means?

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