

Something to Think About: 18 April 2010

In the face of tragedy

In the face of the tragedy for Poland with the death in the air crash of the President and political leaders, military leaders and intellectuals, how can we proclaim Easter joy? Since hearing the news on Sunday morning I keep getting waves of despair sweep over me. I keep saying to myself 'What would we do in this country if half our political and financial leadership, our cultural leaders and thinkers and many of our senior states-persons were killed on one crash?' Where would we find hope and joy and life? I return time and again to the faith-statement that life will overcome death/light will overcome dark; and to the awareness that it is the depths of darkness a national tragedy - such as this produces - that focuses the mind toward a revaluing of life and happiness. We take so much for granted, we often put value in strange impersonal places such as 'having things' to show how much more successful we are than others and we waste time feeding unhappiness and anxiety rather than reaching for what we know of happiness and satisfaction. If my faith is in a personal God who cares just for me and for each of us individually, then hurt and death and tragedy seem either the result of God's negligence or God's intention to cause pain and hurt. This God does not compel a loving and compassionate response from me, rather a response of hopelessness because I can do nothing. But if my life is held in the embrace of community and a dynamic for the well-being of all people and for the earth, then we can weep together in mutual support, and we can work for wellbeing together, and together we can strive to bring happiness and joy out of the pain of tragedy. In other words we can be partner God in the restoration of life out of death; we can be witnesses to the dynamic to get life in balance, to restore what is broken to include what has been marginalised, to find hope again. This is the Easter faith that I feel compelled to proclaim in the face of untimely, senseless death however it comes – cross, car, alcohol, tsunami or plane crash. And Poland – a nation squeezed between the superpowers of Germany and Russia, will be able to draw strength from its neighbours who will share compassionately in the rebuilding of its self-confidence and dream.