

Easter – 2019

A week ago I was walking down a hallway in the school building when Mr Cormier called me into his room and had me look at his computer monitor. With a bit of shock and sadness, I saw what had his attention, the cathedral of Notre Dame in flames. I have had the good fortune to have visited and prayed in Notre Dame. The conflagration raged through the wooden beams of the cathedral and eventually caused the roof and the spire to collapse. Because much of the building is stone and firefighters worked furiously to douse the flames, the framework stands. And the cathedral will be re-built.

Begun in the 12th century, Notre Dame has stood for over 800 years. It is noted for its flying buttresses, its rose windows, its towers, its organ and its bells. It has hosted the coronations of kings and emperors, the weddings of monarchs, the funerals of the famous. It has endured times of neglect, suffered desecration and narrowly escaped destruction on several occasions. In his tribute to the grand edifice, Victor Hugo vividly evoked its decrepit 19th-century state: "But noble as it has remained while growing old, one cannot but regret, cannot but feel indignant at the innumerable degradations and mutilations inflicted on the venerable pile, both by the action of time and the hand of man, regardless alike of Charlemagne, who laid the first stone, and Philip Augustus, who laid the last. On the face of this ancient queen of our cathedrals, beside each wrinkle one invariably finds a scar. '*Tempus edax, homo edacior*,' which I would be inclined to translate: 'Time is blind, but man is senseless.'"

'*Tempus edax, homo edacior*'. 'Time is blind, but man is senseless.' It occurred to me that the fire at the cathedral is something of a metaphor for the mystery we celebrate at Easter. We all experience the eventual wear and tear that time exacts on our body, mind and spirit. Aging we can understand. But as a lot we human beings can also be senseless. We cause harm to ourselves and also to others, sometimes by blindness, sometimes by neglect, and sometimes by outright malice. It is indeed behavior of people who are senseless.

The cathedral at Notre Dame will be re-built. Many have already pledged money to have that symbol of faith, that symbol of the city of Paris, and ultimately a symbol of the French nation restored. But it will take time, and it will require the sacrifice of many to restore the cathedral to its glory.

Throughout holy week we have traced the story of Christ's redemptive effort on our behalf. Just like a fire, sinfulness and selfishness ravage our interiors. That framework which God created with pristine grace before the fall of Adam and Eve still stands, but it is sorely in need of attention if it is to be restored to the glory for which God created each one of us. So that requires a sacrifice. It requires an effort that is beyond our own capabilities. Christ made that sacrifice for each one of us when he took on the passion, suffering and death of the cross. Because he willingly embraced suffering on our behalves, we have the possibility of enjoying the great promise which we celebrate at Easter.

But that salvific activity also requires our cooperation. We trust that the prayers, sacrifices, and charity we embraced throughout the season of Lent will connect us to Christ's saving work. On Easter, we celebrate Christ's resurrection, raised from the grave on the third

day. It is the promise of Easter that this very human framework which we inhabit will one day be transformed into the likeness of Christ's own resurrected body. That as Christ was raised on the third day, we will be called from the tomb to live with him in a glorified body. We will endure, exult and exalt – no longer subject either to the dissolution of blind time nor to the destructiveness of senseless human beings.