

The Time has Come

„Now is the acceptable time, the time of Grace” (2 Cor 6:2)

“pluck up – pull down – build – plant” (Jer 1:10)

The Light of Altenberg is being envisioned and carried out by a group of young adults. Each year in fall, we start working on next year’s festival by looking for a motto that captures the essence of what we try to convey to our guests on coming May 1.

Some of the last years’ mottos were “Take up the Light in both your hands” – “I am with you, get up” – “Light in sight”. They were mottos of the pandemic and the multiple crises that troubled the world (and the Church). We had the urgent feeling that what we had to convey to the young people celebrating with us, was mostly hope, consolation, and encouragement. We tried to stir up hope and trust in the fact that there still is a divine light glimmering in you, even if you perceive yourself to be a “jar of clay”, delicate and breakable.

Now, the question is: have things improved, are the crises behind us? Certainly not, so much we have to realistically acknowledge, no sugarcoating allowed. That being said – is it enough then to whisper words of hope to one another, just to be able to find a good night’s sleep after the light of Altenberg? “God will take care of all things...?” And even if God does – what is *our* mission then? “The love of Christ urges us on.” That’s what St. Paul writes to the Corinthians. We do have a responsibility, we cannot lie back, time is pressing. The “eleventh hour” was yesterday in many places. Today, not tomorrow, is the time to act. We are not only responsible for the little spark of hope in ourselves, but for the whole of Creation, for the world, our society, our Church. We have a *vocation for this world!*

“Okay, but...” you might answer. “How much change can I achieve?” And that is right: many crises are too big and too complex for me to tackle immediately, true enough. Very few are powerful enough to turn on the big gear wheels of our world, and that may be frustrating. And yet it should not! For the mechanics of this world – like a clockwork – has and needs the intricate gear wheels that are not less important for the whole, little though they may be. And thus: what is the immediate context of my world where the sprockets of my gear wheel grab? In what proximity am I an effective agent of change? Then *that* is my calling, my vocation! *The time has come!*

“Now is the time of Grace” is another one St. Paul’s exclamations in the Second Letter to the Corinthians. It expresses the spirit in which we participate in remodeling and transforming the world. Knowing that our time may be full of challenges, but it is certainly not god-less nor help-less. Nonetheless it seemed to soft and “harmless” labeling our time a “time of Grace”. That is why we accompanied the sentence with yet another passage from Scripture, giving us a “checklist for change” that we found in the vocation of the prophet Jeremiah: “Do not be afraid, for I am with you to deliver you. Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the Lord said to me: now I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.”

Whatever we have to do, wherever our vocation might lead us: it is certainly not going to be harmless – and that is why we ourselves are not harmless nor powerless!