

SOULFOOD

reflective moments

an ode to
GIVING



Proudly presented by the Baha'i community of Adelaide

The Baha'i Faith celebrates the unity and diversity of the human family,
the essential harmony of all religions and the oneness of the Universal

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This program is dedicated to United Nations
"International Anti-Poverty Week"

Opening Music

THE URGENCY

What is it of which ye can rightly boast? Is it on your food and your drink that ye pride yourselves, on the riches ye lay up in your treasures, on the diversity and the cost of ornaments with which ye deck yourselves?

If true glory were to consist in the possession of such perishable things, then the earth on which ye walk must needs vaunt itself over you, because it supplieth you, and bestoweth upon you, these very things, by the decree of the Almighty. In its bowels are contained, according to what God hath ordained, all that ye posses. From it, as a sign of His mercy, ye derive your riches.

Behold then your state, the thing in which ye glory! Would that ye could perceive it!

- Baha'u'llah, from the Baha'i writings

Fifty-to-one

Driving in my car all alone I am one.
Entangled on the pick-up truck sit another twenty one.

Inside it's air-conditioned, sanitised, the music sounds so sweet.
Other's taste the dust, feel the heat, engine groans and misses a beat.

At home in the cool, we are only four. A room for every one of us, and more.
Eight are elsewhere sitting all around. They are by their single room that sleeps them on the ground.

The refrigerator is open revealing supermarket food inside. Each day a new taste sensation, scraps tossed aside.
Others eating from the garden, only once the rains have come. The same food daily, only less with each new sun.

THE GAP IS WIDE, getting wider every day.
It makes me think, it makes me wonder, but can I say.

It's fifty-to-one, fifty to one.
That's the difference between us, it's not just a sum.

- from the Malawi Times, Publishers Ian and Wendy Dicks:2002

Anti-Poverty Week

Anti-Poverty Week is an international annual event held during the week coinciding with the 17th October (International Anti-Poverty Day).

The main aims of the Anti-Poverty Week are to:

Strengthen public understanding of the causes of poverty and hardship around the world and in Australia.

Encourage research, discussion and action to address these problems, including actions by individuals, organizations and governments.

The National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling has estimated that, in 2001, 1.7 million Australians – 1 in 10 – were living in poverty.

Around the world more than a billion people are desperately poor.

What causes poverty today? Is it bad luck or laziness on the part of individuals? Or is it due to the way society is ordered? What are the unjust institutions in our society? What are people's experiences at the hand of them? Why are things the way they are? Who is deciding that it should be that way?

A MOMENT IN TIME TO PONDER.

Musical Reflection

A CRISIS OF MISPLACED VALUES

The Baha'i International Community understands poverty as a symptom of a system of economic and social relationships – in the family, the community, the nation, and the world – that promote the advantage of the few at the expense of the many. As such, remedies to this complex issues must be rooted in a systemic approach that directly addresses the harmful and destructive values driving human attitudes, behaviours, and decision-making.

- Baha'i International Community's comment submitted to the United Nations, "Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights": 2007

It has long been held by the enlightened that unlimited growth and ever-increasing consumption were ideals that every society must strive to attain.

The economic boom that followed World War II has lasted for a generation, turning a majority of the inhabitants of the industrialised nations into compulsive consumers.

Indeed, unlike ancient Greeks who defined man as a rational animal, modern thinkers began to think of him as a consuming robot whose destiny was to buy and turn into refuse billions of tons of food, clothing, cars, household goods, and gadgets of every sorts.

Nothing could be permitted to last: styles, fashions, tastes, preferences, and appetites had to change incessantly, spurring consumption and littering the world.

The energy crisis, monetary crisis, global warming sounded the alarms, sending shivers down the spine of industrial societies. Attempts to exorcise the spectres with words are bound to fail, for the crisis is real. It is a crisis not only of mal-distribution but, more essentially, of misplaced values.

A civilization based on the premise that happiness is the taste of a cigarette, possession of a car, a summer home, and so on, ...a civilization in which everything, including love and honour, are for sale, is bound to atrophy the heart, damage the mind, and inflate the ego.

The unquenchable thirst for, and feverish pursuit after earthy vanities, riches, and pleasures, and the lapse into luxurious indulgence, the all-pervasive materialism of contemporary life are the ultimate causes of the current crisis.

- *World Order Magazine*

O Son of Passion!

Cleanse thyself from the defilement of riches and in perfect peace advance into the realm of poverty; that from the wellspring of detachment thou mayest quaff the wine of immortal life.

- *The Hidden Words of Baha'u'llah, from the Baha'i writings*

Musical Reflection

MAKE POVERTY HISTORY

When humanity is in chaos like it is now, the simplest teaching given by the aboriginals is to respect each other. Nobody is better than anybody else. Love one another. Especially in these time of chaos.

I don't just mean the love between husband and wife. I mean the humanity love as well. And just the caring towards each other. No discrimination. No racism. Everybody is equal. And that is what God wants us to do.

You see we believe there is a God in heaven, just like everybody else. But we believe that God is the pure illuminating light of love. It's a Being. God's not a man or a woman. It's a Beautiful Being of love.

All humanity should know that and love each other. That's the ultimate aim of humanity.

- Lorraine Mafi Williams, Senior Aboriginal Elder

If beings knew as I know, the result of giving and sharing, they would not eat without having given, nor would they allow the stain of meanness to obsess them and take root in their minds. Even if it were their last morsel, their last mouthful, they would not eat without having shared it, if there were someone to share it with.

But as beings do not know, as I know the result of giving and sharing, they eat without having given, and the stain of meanness obsesses them and takes root in their minds.

- from the Buddhist writings

In The Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

The true believers are those whose hearts are filled with awe at the mention of Allah, and whose faith grows stronger as they listen to His revelations. They are those who put their trust in their Lord, pray steadfastly, and bestow in alms of that which We have given them.

Such are the true believers. They shall be exalted and forgiven by their Lord, and a generous provision shall be made for them.

- from the Qu'ran, Islamic writings

If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the Lord thy God given thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: but thy shalt open thy hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth.

Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou putteth thine hand unto.

For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.

- *New Testament, from the Christian writings*

Be not troubled in poverty nor confident in riches, for poverty is followed by riches, and riches are followed by poverty.

Yet to be poor in all save God is a wondrous gift, belittle not the value thereof, for in the end it will make thee rich in God and thus shalt know the meaning of the utterance, “in truth ye are the poor,” and the holy words, “God is the all-possessing”.

- *The Hidden Words of Baha'u'llah, from the Baha'i writings*

Musical Reflection

WAYS OF GIVING

WHAT GREAT POVERTY

Are we aware of that?

Do we know what fear is?

Do we know the lonely?

Do we know the unwanted and the unloved?

Do we know the hungry?

Do we really know what hunger is?

I'll give you an example of what hunger is.

A child got a piece of bread from a sister. (He had not eaten for some time.) I saw that child eating the bread slowly, crumb by crumb. I said to him, "I know you are hungry, why don't you eat the bread up?" The little one answered, "I want it to last longer!" He was afraid that when he finished the bread, his hunger would come back again. And so he ate it crumb by crumb!

The other child next to him was not even eating. I thought that he had finished his bread. But the little one said, "My father is sick, and I think he would love to have this piece of bread."

That good little child was willing to go without food to be able to give his father the joy of having a little piece of bread.

- *Mother Teresa*

COMPASSION is not simply a sense of sympathy or caring for the person suffering, not simply a warmth of heart towards the person before you, or a sharp clarity of recognition of their needs and pain – it is a sustained and practical determination to do whatever is possible and necessary to help alleviate their suffering.

- *Sogyal Rinpoche*

THE POOR ARE GREAT PEOPLE.

They don't need our sympathy.

They aren't asking us to feel sorry for them.

They are great people!

They deserve our love!

Not long ago, some sisters and I went out and picked up four or five people off the streets. One of them was in terrible condition, so I told the sisters, "I'll take care of her." And I tried to do all that I could for her, all that my love of Jesus could do.

When I put her in bed, she took hold of my hand. There was a beautiful smile on her face. She said only, "Thank you!" And then she died.

She gave me much more than I ever given her, she gave me her grateful love. I couldn't help but examine myself, I said, "If I were she, what would I have done?" And my answer was sincere, "I would have tried to draw some attention to myself by saying, "I am hungry, I'm cold, I'm dying!"

But she had courage, and she had love to give to me, instead of keeping it to herself, instead of being focussed on herself. These are very admirable things!

- *Mother Teresa*

A Reflection by Robert Fulgham

There's a clay tablet in the British Museum that's dated about 3800 B.C. – Babylonian. It's a census report – a people count – to determine tax revenues.

The Egyptians and the Romans conducted census counts. And there's William the Conqueror's famous Domesday Book, compiled in England in 1085.

Counting people tells some interesting things. Especially since computers enable us to extrapolate trends into the future. Take this, for example: ...

The total population of the earth at the time of the Julius Caesar was 150 Million. Today, the total population increase in two years on earth is 150 million.

The statisticians figure that about 60 billion people have been born so far. And as I said, there's no telling how many more there will be, but it looks like a lot.

And yet – here comes the statistic of statistics – with all the possibilities for variations among the sex cells produced by each person's parents, it seems quite certain that each of the billions of human beings who has ever existed has been distinctly different from every other human being, and this will continue for the indefinite future.

In other words, if you were to line up on one side of the earth every human beings who ever lived or ever will live, and you took a good look at the whole motley crowd, **YOU WOULDN'T FIND ANYBODY QUITE LIKE YOU.**

Now wait, there's more.

If you were to line up on the other side of the earth every other living thing that ever was or will be, you'd find that the creatures on the people side would be **MORE** like you than **ANYTHING** over the other side.

Finally, this: There was a famous French criminologist named Emile Locard, and fifty years ago he came up with something called Locard Exchange Principle.

It says something to the effect that any person passing through a room will unknowingly deposit something there and take something away. Modern technology proves it.

Fulghum's Exchange Principle extends it: Every person passing through this life will unknowingly leave something and take something away. Most of this **SOMETHING** cannot be seen or heard or numbered. It does not show up in a census. **BUT NOTHING COUNTS WITHOUT IT.**

Let your striving be for this, to become the source of life and immortality, and peace and comfort and joy, to every human soul, whether one known to you or a stranger, one opposed to you or on your side.

Look ye not upon the purity or impurity of his nature: look ye upon the all-embracing mercy of the Lord, the light of Whose grace hath embosomed the whole earth and all who dwell thereon, and in the plenitude of Whose bounty are immersed both the wise and ignorant.

- *Baha'u'llah, from the Baha'i writings*

Musical Finale

join us for the next program

3rd Sunday of every month
Sunday November 16th, 11am
Radford Auditorium,
Art Gallery of South Australia