

Archbishop Smith: Certainty Amid Uncertainty

More than once I've had occasion to share with people a moment that impacted me greatly when I first became a Bishop. It occurred during the 2002 World Youth Days in Toronto. Together with hundreds of thousands of young people, I was listening to Saint John Paul II as he spoke during a prayer vigil the evening before the closing mass. Reflecting upon the vast changes sweeping across cultures and nations, he asked this question: "on what foundations, on what certainties should we build our lives and the life of the community to which we belong?" Then he gave the answer: "Christ alone is the cornerstone on which it is possible solidly to build one's existence. Only Christ – known, contemplated and loved – is the faithful friend who never lets us down, who becomes our travelling companion, and whose words warm our hearts."

It is striking how pertinent these words are for everyone throughout the world at this present moment of uncertainty. What we thought were certainties on which we could reliably build our lives are now revealed to be anything but solid. Presuppositions, expectations, and hopes that we accepted as a sure foundation have evaporated, leaving us with the experience of having nothing concrete upon which to stand. Hence the uncertainty that is giving rise to deep anxiety in hearts everywhere.

Especially in these times of insecurity, it is helpful to keep in mind that there is always one certainty that never changes and is perennially rock-solid, always reliable: that is the person of Jesus Christ. As St. John Paul II put it, "Christ known, contemplated and loved."

Many ideas are being shared about what can be done to help pass the time when people find themselves at home with little to do. I hear talk of binge-watching of television or movies, of good books to read, or of board games to try. How about setting aside a substantial amount of time for prayer and the reading of Sacred Scripture? We can use this time to contemplate the mystery of Jesus Christ. As we meditate upon him, we come to the awareness that we are encountering the One who promised always to be with us, even to the end of time. Jesus is always faithful to his promises. His pledge to us will never be broken. He loves us and will always hold us up. There is nothing more certain than that!

To assist you in your contemplation, I recommend you pray with the parable taught by Jesus about the wise and foolish men who chose, respectively, rock or sand for the foundations on which they built their houses (Matthew 7:24-27). The question of the certainties on which we construct our lives, raised nearly 20 years ago by St. John Paul II, has become pressingly real for us as today we deal with the repercussions of COVID-19. "Christ known, contemplated and loved"

is the only answer in which we can place our full confidence. Only in Christ do we find the certainty that sustains us amid uncertainties, and always.