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Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

Fine wine and music impart meaning to the madness

IBEGAN 2014 by writing: 'Choose a new composer each month and listen to his greatest works. As evening falls, sit back with a tincture of your favourite brew, close your eyes and let the sweet sound do the rest.' Much to my great surprise, many of you took my advice and have enjoyed the experience.

For as long as I can remember, Mrs Dooley and I have rounded off the day with a tincture and a tune. It is our way of sanctifying the hours, of giving thanks for all that Providence has provided. It is a small but significant ceremony that reminds us of our countless blessings.

That we choose music and wine to wrap a halo around the day is not arbitrary. Both root us to time and place, to the soil and the soul. Both force us to focus on the higher life.

The earthly journey can be long or short. It can be comic or tragic, a trail of tears or a pathway of peace. Either way, life can only be lived to the full when, every so often, we savour the glory of creation.

To focus on higher things is not to divert one's eyes from the world. It is to focus on the beauty to which so many of us are blind. It is to gaze at the majesty of 'ordinary' things, to smile in awe at their splendour.

The most beautiful things are to be found in the midst of the mundane: a child's laughter, an autumn sunset, a tender touch, the sweet smell of a rose in bloom.

These things constantly surround us, yet we rarely take time simply to savour them. We rarely pause to marvel at their magnificence.

We rarely 'take time' but to do so is to catch glimpses of eternity here on Earth. In each one of those seemingly small things is something so bright and beautiful. They redeem us from our torments and shine a light into the heart of darkness.

Our poor world is so distracted that it no longer recognises light or love. We look at things but rarely into their depths. That is why taking time is such an imperative, for in neglecting to do so we pass through this world as strangers.

The sun begins to settle. I select a tune and prepare for the toast. As it flows, the wine fills the glass with the scent of soil, of some ancient settlement where people are rooted with their vines. Then, as the music fills the room, you begin to notice the little things that make everything else worthwhile.

This is a powerful sensory experience, one in which tastes, sound and

sight all work in heavenly harmony. Yet it is one that transcends the sensory in the direction of infinity. In those moments of benediction, you just know there is more than the eye can see.

Music is the medium of the heart, that which summons the angels to our side. Without it, we simply cannot find consolation. It is a soothing balm for the soul, a gateway to all that is good.

In sipping to these sounds, you begin to see meaning in the midst of madness. The trees outside, the grass, the evening breeze – all these begin to offer up their secrets. Somehow, you begin to feel at home once more in the world.

To take time like this transforms the way life is viewed. No longer is it perceived as a burden but as a blessing. You find that where once you grumbled, now you give only grace.

Most of all, you begin to see each and every day as a gift. You start to see that we are surrounded by miracles, small things we have long since taken for granted but that are, in essence, signs of the sacred. In taking time, we gain time for the things that truly matter.

So positive was your response to my suggestion that you round off the day like this, that a dear friend prevailed on me add a 'Tastes and Tunes' tab to my website.

This is 'an invitation to consecrate the day and the week with wine and music'. Each week I shall recommend a new wine, tune and an accompanying text that I hope will help you get the best out of both.

OUR time here is so short and, in many cases, so troubled. Still, we have been given so much, not only to make it less burdensome but to make it profoundly beautiful. While that is obvious in the case of great music, it is less so in that of wine.

Let us not forget, however, that two of the most remarkable miracles in the history of salvation involved wine. Let us recall that the Creator Himself chose to appear as the fruit of the vine. What better way, therefore, to bless the day than to raise a small chalice in thanksgiving?

To do so is to make special each of our days. It is to go to our rest knowing that whatever the future holds, the past has been blessed and made perfect.

It is to know that, even now, this world is truly a place of miracles, if only we would take time to notice.

For more, please visit drmarkdooley.com/tastes-tunes/