

Kindling that light in our hearts: Peter Millar reflects on 30 December 2020.

Around our connected world we welcome a new year which as in 2020 is likely to be filled with uncertainties wherever we are on the planet. It may be the virus, it may be climate change: for millions it is definitely increasing poverty and suffering. It is often a temptation to move our hearts and minds away from these realities. That is not the way ahead for any of us on the brink of another year. There is a different truth at work. Each one of us is being asked to be a person of light in our own situation in 2021. To be that person is not an easy task, but it is the task in hand, for we are all embedded in the human condition and we share a common heart-beat with all our sisters and brothers on this beautiful, wounded earth. One of the glorious realities about this last difficult year was that millions of us around the world discovered new and deeper levels of God's compassion within us. Was that not wonderful? Across the globe, people reached out to one another in truly amazing ways. We discovered that there is a divine love in us quite different from that love so endlessly announced to us through celebrity culture. This flowering of the 'compassionate heart' will not cease in 2021. It will grow as we face a range of new and disturbing challenges. 'Deep hope' is possible in such times, and in the better places of our being we know that this is true. Last week a UK journalist wrote that the virus has pushed all of us off the feather beds of our civilization. But whatever the virus has done to us as a world community, it had not destroyed that gift which is within us all – the 'gift of the resurrected spirit'. It was that gift which Dorothy and I saw time and time again among the poorest families when our home was in South India. For many families in India all the odds seemed against them. To say life was hard each day would be a total understatement. Yet they had something more than their outward poverty. Much more. They had 'the light within'. The divine light deep within the soul. And that light gave them hope. We in the affluent countries who, relatively, have so much more in terms of outward things (not all of us by any means) are now being awakened to discover the 'inner light' in ways we never imagined. It may be that being immersed in powerful uncertainties, as in these times, is enabling us to enter our depths with fresh awareness. And if we are on that journey, the year ahead, whatever it brings, will actually be embedded in lasting hope for our turbulent world. On that journey we may have to say farewell to many familiar markers, but we shall have found, as Jesus reminded us long ago, the 'pearl of great price'. This Celtic prayer says it all: **I am in trust, that in its proper time, the great and gracious God will not put out for me the light of hope.**