

Along the track

Thank God for the Explorers

Could you imagine Italian food without tomatoes? Yet the humble tomato arrived there around 1500 all the way from South America, brought there by the explorers. Until then there were no tomatoes with pasta or any other Italian food. Two hundred years later, mass migration helped the tomato to spread across the globe. Not all such discoveries were as beneficial – tobacco hasn't been a huge boost to the health of humankind. But so many discoveries have resulted from curiosity, from the desire to discover, to try out new ways, new ideas, new tastes.

Being curious, asking questions, wondering what might be is part of our nature and thank God for that! Even Christian faith relies on such an attitude:

Christian faith sets out to move a person from within to wonder, to question, to seek greater understanding. (Catechism #158, General Directory for Catechesis # 92)

Enjoying discovery, pursuing wonder and imagination in what we see, taste, smell, touch and hear are God's gifts to us. They are part of what it means to be human. We have been gifted with curious minds and restless spirits and it is in the use of those gifts that we become more aware of what speaks to us of God's beauty and purpose.

So thank God for the explorers, the dreamers, those who have gone into the unknown in the search of new ways and new understandings. Thank God for those who search in so many new frontiers today, in science and medicine, in agriculture, in conservation and production, in the outer reaches of space and the inner landscapes of the mind and body. Where would we be today without their courage, their insights, their passion, their sense of adventure and curiosity, their determination to find answers and seek out the truth. Not being content with what is familiar and comfortable, they have had the courage to step out into the unknown, to open new frontiers.

We give thanks for those who have gone out into the deep in their pursuit of discovery and truth, those who have sought to understand Your creation more fully. Some have endured ridicule and suspicion, even trial and persecution. Sometimes they have endured the humiliation of being wrong but, in the process, others have gained insights and understandings from their journey. We have all been affected, shaped and changed by their insights and discoveries.

Thank God they did not give in to the pressure that comes from fear - fear of the unknown, fear of confusion, of getting hurt, of being misunderstood, of being laughed at or ridiculed, fear of not feeling the comfort from certainty. That can make us timid and reticent, at the door of discovery but too fearful to enter, too secure and set in our ways to be open to different paths or ways of thinking.

In Pope Francis' words "To stay close to God, we need to know how to set out; we must not be afraid to set out." Pope Francis

Every day is a new chapter in our journey of life. Today may bring new insights, new understandings, discoveries or perhaps even more questions. We must never be afraid to set out into the unknown. We can never say 'we have arrived!' because that stifles our inner freedom. When we can recognise that we do not have all the truth, that God's revelation gradually unfolds we can come closer to knowing God and God's ways. It is not by closing our minds that we find God – it is by opening them up, seeking, questioning, allowing ourselves to be filled with awe and wonder that we come to know something of the wonder and beauty of God.

Each moment we live is new. There has never been such a moment as this and there never will be again. Each day, each year is new and different, a precious gift. Each day God's grace invites us to life, God's grace plants dreams and hopes within our soul. Sometimes it is easy to accept God's invitation, sometimes it takes courage, faith to step into the unknown. After the resurrection, Jesus appeared again to the disciples by the Sea of Galilee. Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, the brothers Zebedee, and two other disciples went fishing but caught nothing after a night out on the water. John writes that Jesus spoke to them: "Good morning! Did you catch anything for breakfast?" They answered, "No." He said, "Throw the net off the other side of the boat and see what happens." They did what he said. All of a sudden there were so many fish in it, they weren't strong enough to pull it in. (John 21:1–6)

We get that invitation daily – to try something new, something different, another way.

Regards
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