

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF HAPPINESS

Friday March 20, 2020

Today is International Happiness Day.

Hmmm. I awoke to the news that 500 persons with COVID-19 died in Bergamo, Italy, yesterday--the highest number yet recorded in the course of this pandemic for one city.

5 a.m.--time for my first cup of happiness, which I brew under the calendar photo of Bergamo. Bergamo has watched over my stove and innumerable chefs these past two decades, undisturbed. Those blotches aren't clouds. They are twenty years of treasured accumulation of moisture and dust. This image is aging well, in my estimation. Besides the image itself, the city of Bergamo--my memories of it from two decades ago--bring me much happiness. The upper city is celestial. The stroll up to it is heavenly. So enchanting. So memorable. Architecture, history, spirituality, botany--even without photos, it lives and breathes and sighs, awesome, in my memory.

I didn't make any lasting human connections in Bergamo. Mine is a purely ethereal connection. In nearby Milan, I do have numerous immigrant (Sri Lanka, El Salvador) and Italian friends, who have graciously hosted me and guided me around this impressive city on occasion. Milan has been hard-hit this month as well, and has hit the tragic news too often. I am concerned for my friends there. They assure me they are fine, though "locked inside the house." I have seen some relatives of friends, recently returned from Milan to El Salvador, a few months pre-virus.

After pondering Bergamo while my coffee brewed, including taking these first photos of this well-aged calendar, I made my daily dawn ascent, mug in hand, up the ladder to the roof, where the sunrise was delayed momentarily by ominous, unseasonal clouds. The sun did break through shortly, assuring me of a Day of Happiness.

A recent video of Bergamo's renowned Hospital Papa Giovanni XXIII popped up on my feed--not a focal point for happiness this Day of Happiness.

While on my roof, I signed up for Yale's new online Happiness Course, along with several thousand previously registered classmates. Purportedly the most popular class in Yale's history, no doubt I'll be even happier on this Day of Happiness next year (actually, in a mere couple of months, I'm assured).

Down from my mountaintop (well, rooftop), I once again face all the unhappy calamities of the many calamity-a-week housemates and friends and colleagues and acquaintances and neighbours who surround me. Calamity invariably finds them (and then they find me), whatever home they're staying home in, no matter how happy we all are this Day of Happiness.

From Bergamo to San Salvador, may God grant us--may we all enjoy--some measure of happiness this Day of Happiness. In God's loving, caring, healing hands we rest, happy in the assurance of God's presence with us.

The Rev. Dr. Brian Rude,

"In Mission with El Salvador / En Misión con El Salvador"

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