

Food and Drink: a Reflexion

Now in the second week of Lent
I'm asked to write of food or drink.
Ah, was this topic's timing meant
To make us stop, reflect and think?
For as the ancient hymn proclaims -
Ex more docti mystico
Servemus abstinentiam:
That we by mystic custom taught
Should keep this time of self-restraint.
Ut amur ergo parcius
Verbis, cibus et potibus:
More sparingly then let us choose
The words, the food and drink we use.

But what, perhaps you ask, does such
A time of self-restraint achieve?
It has been shown it can improve
Alertness, mood, and help relieve
Depression and indeed may boost
Our cognitive performance too.
For those who've problems with their weight
It surely helps to shed a few
Or more unwanted kilos and,
With body mass index reduced,
And cardiometabolic risk
Factors decreased, health has a boost
And general wellness is induced.

For those who trust the final verse
Of th' ancient hymn there's further gain.
Præsta, beata Trinitas,
Concede, simplex Unitas,
Ut fructuosa sint tuis
Hæc parcitatis mûnera:
Hear us, Oh blessed Trinity
And undivided Unity,
And grant that truly fruitful be
The works of our frugality.
For we believe that self-restraint
Combined with penance, alms and prayer
Improves our soul's wellness, and makes
Us spiritually more aware.
It deepens more our love of God
And love of fellow humans too -
Of men and women whatsoever
Their origin or rank or race.
For love transcends all time and space.

But I, yes, I may choose to fast
Or choose to eat and drink at will.
Too many, far too many have
No choice, can never have their fill
But needs must fast or starve where food
And drink are scarce or hard to find.
And on the news we're seeing now
How those in Gaza's strip confined
Are facing famine most severe.
And famine's stark and critical
In Yemen and in Syria,
Afghanistan, and South Sudan,
And Ethiopia as well.
Burkina Faso also knows
The scourge of famine, and so does
The Democratic Republic
O' the Congo; likewise also do
Somalia, Nigeria,
Sudan, the Central African
Republic, and Uganda too;
And so do Venezuela and
Honduras and Haiti know
The scourge of hunger and of thirst.
Why should these millions be so cursed?

It need not be! It should not be!
In this year's lenten message from
Pope Francis, we are asked just how
We can explain the fact that though
Humanity has now arrived
At levels of scientific and
Of technical, of cultural
And of juridical devel-
opment that could enable us
To guarantee true dignity
To all, it nonetheless still gropes
About within the darkness of
Injustice, inequality,
And conflict. It's the deficit
Of hope, he says, we must combat,
And rise above the hopelessness
That stifles dreams and makes us deaf
To pleas of those who suffer now.
We must take courage and take risks
And strive towards a better world,
A world of equity and peace,
Where all from fear and want are freed
And there's no hunger, thirst or need.