



from Garth...

Ernesto Cardinal

I was woken the other morning by a text from a friend to let me know that the great poet, priest and Sandinista, Ernesto Cardinal, had died. The text was from longtime friend Sue Plater and she added the word "Presenté!"

This comes from a custom in Latin America at a funeral service to call out the name of the person who has died - the community reply "Presenté".



Ernesto Cardinal - Poet, Priest and Liberation Theologian

In other words it is a piece of resurrection symbolism meaning they are still present within the community.

Kris Kristofferson uses this at the end of his song **Mal Sacate** about Nicaragua:

**They killed so many heroes
Like Zapata (Presente!) and Fonseca (Presente!)
And Sandino (Presente!) ...
But they can never kill the human spirit
Not in Nicaragua!**

Ernesto was a remarkable poet, a priest who ran into problems with Pope John Paul II because he was in the Sandinista government. Nevertheless as the New York Times says in an article about him, "He was one of Latin America's most

admired poets and priests who defied the Roman Catholic church in the 1980s.” Famously scolded by Pope John Paul II, nevertheless he was an ongoing prophetic intellectual voice in Nicaragua, and though his priestly authority was revoked back at that time, Pope Francis lifted his suspension in February 2019. Gill and I visited him with an Amos group on one of our journeys to Nicaragua, a group which included Chris Rose, now Amos Director. One of us asked him whether he liked the term ‘Liberation Theology’ and he said, “**I prefer the term ‘theology of revolution’.**”

Discussing it afterwards we thought that the theology of the Sermon on the Mount certainly fits that description. In the New York Times article they had a quote that I had not heard before: “Christ led me to Marx,” Father Cardenal said ... For me, the four gospels are all equally communist. I’m a Marxist who believes in God, follows Christ, and is a revolutionary for the sake of his kingdom.” I think this is a very unusual and thought provoking quote – definitely a discussion starter! He remained politically involved - when we visited him he already had concerns about the current Sandinista government and had formed another party.

His personal assistant Luiz Marina said about his death “Our beloved poet has begun the process of integrating with the Universe, with the greatest intimacy with God.”

This song that I wrote, called **The Poets of Nicaragua** not only reflects the work of Ernesto, but also the many other creative artists, painters and musicians and priests, who play such a significant role in the life of Nicaragua.

You can find it on YouTube [here](#)

The Parrots

by Ernesto Cardenal

translated from Spanish

My friend Michel is the military leader in Somoto,
There near the border with Honduras,
And he told me he discovered a contraband shipment of parrots
Set for export to the U.S. to learn to speak English there.
There were 186 parrots, and 47 had already died in their cages.
And he sent them back where they'd come from,
And when the truck reached a place they called The Plains
Near the mountain homes of these parrots

(the mountains looked huge, rising from these plains)
The parrots began to stir and beat their wings
And jam themselves against their cage walls.
And when the cages were opened
They all flew out like arrows in the same direction, toward their mountains.
The Revolution did the same thing for us, I think:
It freed us from the cages where they trapped us to talk English,
It gave us back the country from which we were uprooted,
Their green mountains restored to the parrots by parrot-green soldiers.
But there were 47 that died.

In the Storms of Life



painting by Daniel Bonnell

Without a doubt these are difficult times and this is reflected right across the world. It is heartbreaking to see refugees used as an instrument of blackmail and to see thousands of people desperately trying to find a place to survive.

Leader after leader around the world turns out to be problematic - **it's at times like these that we have to go back to our spiritual roots and draw strength from them. We have a model to follow, even in the darkest times, and so as we go through Lent this is a good time for thinking about the values that we see reflected in Jesus.**

This year's concerts I've called **In the Storms of Life** which is the title of a song on my recent album **My Name Is Palestine**. I hope the verses say something about our world and its leaders, but the chorus reminds us that in the darkest times we are not alone. **There's something about Lent that reminds us to focus our thoughts, to challenge our minds, and to use this time to remind ourselves that we are walking towards Holy Week. We are walking towards Easter.**

Here is the song that will be a key theme of the upcoming concerts -
In the Storms of Life

Lent - a book suggestion and prayers



On the first Sunday of Lent Gill and I were delighted to be back at St.Botolphs Aldgate – the church where we worship in London. Here is St.Botolphs altar with purple for Lent.

A book suggestion

Long time friend Jim Wallis, from the Sojourners community in Washington, has written a book called **Christ in Crisis** which I am reading as one of my Lent books this year.

Richard Rohr, Franciscan Priest and Spiritual writer, says of the book - “This is Jim Wallis at his best, a ‘Jesus book’ better than any I’ve seen in some time, and could not be more timely or more challenging. It offers a drink of fresh water to anyone who has felt despair at the state of the world—Christian and non-Christian alike.”

If you don’t have a Lent book yet, this one puts the words and actions of Jesus in contrast with what is happening politically. Though predominantly rooted in the American political scene it contains a universally relevant challenge to all of us about the Gospel message. Jim speaks with a prophetic voice.



Dieudonné with Garth at the Amos office in St Clement's Eastcheap

Prayers for Lent, and beyond

Prayer for Dieudonné Nahimana, the Founder and Executive Director of Amos' partner New Generation in Burundi, as he stands in the upcoming Presidential elections in Burundi in May.

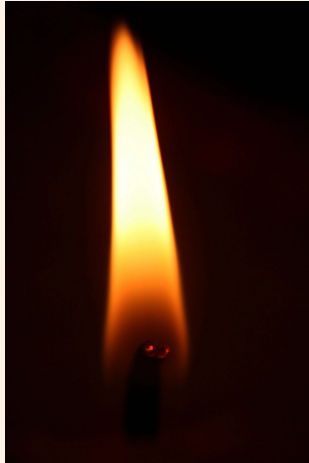
**God of mercy, justice, generosity and compassion
We pray for our friend and brother Dieudonné Nahimana
As he stands to offer himself in service to his community -
In the role of President.**

**Our world is in need of leaders who serve -
Leaders committed to justice
And relief of poverty for the poor.
For 20 years Dieudonné has worked, and trained youth,
In servant-leadership.
He now feels the call to do this on a wider canvas.
We pray for him that he will bring healing and hope
To the nation of Burundi.
And we pray that the values he espouses
Will become part of this election campaign,
And therefore influence others who are running.
Grant him wisdom, peace and hope
As he witnesses to the values
That reflect the character of a loving God.
And may he know the companionship and protection
Of this warm hearted God.**

Prayers are asked for the two missing Archbishops of Aleppo, Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim and Archbishop Paul (Boulos) Yazigi. They were kidnapped in 2013 but sadly there is still no firm news about them, though the two churches say

“We are optimistic that a desirable outcome will be achieved as the Syrian crisis is heading towards its end.”

Use **this song “Mar Gregorios”** from the “Against the Grain” album as a way to pray for them.



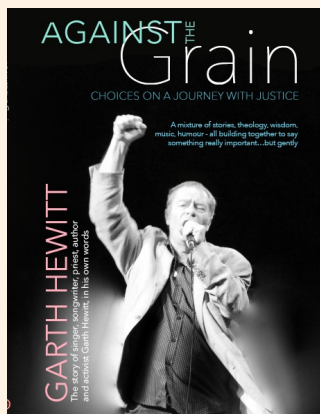
Finally in these days of Lent -
In these difficult days –
God be our companion
As we walk in the wilderness
Lead us to the hope of Easter.
And let us remember one another
Support one another
Pray for one another
Remember the refugees and the oppressed
Remember those with sickness
And those in places of war.

And the blessing of God,
Giver of life
Bearer of pain
Maker of love
Be with us
Now and always.

Amen

Garth Hewitt

You can find out where Garth will be in concert with his *In the Storms of Life* tour [on his website here](#)



Garth book of memoirs is still available - it is a limited edition and will not be reprinted



both the 11 track CD and the 12" vinyl single available here



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