

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY – TUESDAY, 31<sup>ST</sup> AUGUST, 2021  
PROFESSOR TINA BEATTIE, writer and Catholic theologian

## ***“HOPE NOT HATE”***

Good morning.

Last Saturday we joined a crowd in Crystal Palace Park in London, to sit under the stars and listen to composer Max Richter and his ensemble. After these long months of lockdown and social distancing, that was our re-entry into the world of live music and public events, but what a darkening world this is.

The second half of the programme was taken up by Richter’s hauntingly beautiful piece “Voices”, in which the music is threaded through with readings from the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The notes explain that it’s played by a “negative orchestra. . . . As the world has been turned upside down, so have the proportions of this orchestra. It is nearly all basses and cellos.”

The Declaration begins with the affirmation that “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.” Those words, written in the aftermath of the Second World War and the Holocaust, resonate with almost unbearable poignancy today. Yet as Richter reminds us, “While the past is fixed, the future is yet unwritten, and the declaration sets out an uplifting vision of a better and fairer world that is within our reach if we choose it.”

I believe that each one of us can and must make that choice. It’s easy to feel overwhelmed by the challenges we face. Whether it’s news of yet another environmental catastrophe such as Hurricane Ida, or the resurgence of violence in Afghanistan with its heavy toll of suffering and its threat of escalating war and terror, we can feel impotent and very afraid. Such feelings make us prey to the seductions of hatred and violence in our own relationships and attitudes.

But we can write the future in a better way. All peace begins in the human heart. To have peace in our hearts, to learn to live with vulnerability rather than vengeance, to choose hope over hate, is a challenge and an opportunity each of us faces every day.

As Jesus said farewell to his disciples, he gave them his peace and told them, “Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (John 14: 27) Fear can become the enemy of peace, and our hearts are troubled by bad news. But we need courage and hope, if we’re to rise above our fears to seek the freedom, justice and peace which come through recognising the inalienable dignity and rights of all humankind, and indeed of all God’s creation.