

## Pastor's column 22nd Sunday 2021

Pierre Francois Bouchard, in July 1799, discovered near Rachid, in Egypt, what has become known as the "Rosetta Stone." It is a grandiorite stele, with both hieroglyphic and ancient Greek inscriptions, of decrees by Ptolemy V Epiphanes. It provided a necessary key for deciphering the meaning of Egyptian hieroglyphics in general. The term "Rosetta Stone" has now broadened its meaning as to "an essential clue to any new field of knowledge." Such a clue does not have to be inscribed in stone. One such clue to understanding the phenomena of our time may be in an insight by Carl Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist, who wrote: "The psychology of the individual is reflected in the psychology of the nation....Only a change in attitude of the individual can initiate a change in the psychology of the nation." Such a "Rosetta Stone" can be a helpful frame through which to understand Jesus uncompromising words about the wellsprings of human sin and evil. As is often the case, the shocking force of Jesus words, read outside their religio/cultural context, are lost in translation; Jesus says "for it is from within, from men's hearts, that evil intentions emerge- fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, malice, deceit, indecency, envy, slander, pride, folly." One does not need a PhD to "join the dots" linking society's ills, with this comprehensive, though not exclusive, list of personal sins and evil. The curious thing is that in each one of us, they are all the interconnected fruits of a single tree, whose roots go down into the human heart. It can be tempting to view this list as some demonic hierarchy of ever decreasing virulence, exonerating ourselves, like the proverbial Pharisee, tick-boxing the list until we come to the last; "folly", which we may think, hardly merits a glance. Barbara Tuchman, a popular historian, wrote a book called "The March of Folly." She defines folly as the pursuit by government of policies contrary to their own interests, despite the availability of feasible alternatives. The argument was that throughout history we keep repeating the same self-defeating actions, without learning from them, and so the title of her book. Mark Twain may disagree in the ascribed saying, "History never repeats itself, but it does often rhyme." Jung's "Rosetta stone" invites us to a rigorous self-examination of conscience, using Jesus' red flags as a criterion, for taking responsibility for our choices and consequences and how they manifest in society as a whole. He then challenges us to "metanoia" a change of mind and heart. It is St Paul, writing to the Colossians, who tells us to re-root ourselves then in Christ; "As we have trusted Him to save us, we trust Him for each days problems, may we live in vital union with Him, may our roots grow down into Him and draw up nourishment from Him and may we go on growing in the Lord." If Tuchman's book was to be republished posthumously today, it would certainly have to have added a chapter on the present White house and Beehive, and maybe even one on Jung's "Rosetta Stone."