

27ú lá Meitheamh, 2012

by Pádraig Ó Tuama

Because what's the alternative?
Because of courage.
Because of loved ones lost.
Because no more.
5 Because it's a small thing; shaking hands; it happens every day.
Because I heard of one man whose hands haven't stopped shaking since a
market day in Omagh.
Because it takes a second to say hate, but it takes longer, much longer, to be
a great leader.
10 Much, much longer.
Because shared space without human touching doesn't amount to much.
Because it's easier to speak to your own than to hold the hand of someone
whose side has been previously described, proscribed, denied.
Because it is tough.
15 Because it is tough.
Because it is meant to be tough, and this is the stuff of memory, the stuff of
hope, the stuff of gesture, and meaning and leading.
Because it has taken so, so long.
Because it has taken land and money and languages and barrels and barrels
20 of blood.
Because lives have been lost.
Because lives have been taken.
Because to be bereaved is to be troubled by grief.
Because more than two troubled peoples live here.
25 Because I know a woman whose hand hasn't been shaken since she was a
man.
Because shaking a hand is only a part of the start.
Because I know a woman whose touch calmed a man whose heart was
breaking.
30 Because privilege is not to be taken lightly.
Because this just might be good.
Because who said that this would be easy?
Because some people love what you stand for, and for some, if you can,
they can.
35 Because solidarity means a common hand.
Because a hand is only a hand; so hang onto it.
So join your much discussed hands.
We need this; for one small second.
So touch.
40 So lead.
In 2012, after decades of sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland, the Queen
and Martin McGuinness, Sinn Féin's deputy first minister, publicly
shook hands.