

New Beginnings?

I have seen it all before. Wars and rumours of... but let me not be too cynical. As one who has lived through the 1960s and seen the fall of the Soviet Union and the Iron Curtain, the Trump/Brexit/Refugees thing seems quite mild by comparison.

2016 reminds me of the 1960's, when all that had been certain seemed under attack from all directions. At first the sights and sounds were distant: Kennedy – the first Catholic President in the White House, Civil Rights in America, Joan Baez and Bob Dylan, the Vietnam War.

Then – television in friends' houses, electricity in other places than our road.

Then the roof came in: the Beatles in Dublin – the Beatles everywhere! Kennedy, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy all shot dead! We got Richard Nixon, napalm and Agent Orange in Vietnam, the Civil Rights Campaign in Northern Ireland. How could anyone be against Civil Rights, I wondered? The RUC were. Most, but not all, Unionists were.

Then – television in every house. Men on the Moon, the 'Troubles' – enough change for a lifetime! But there was more: the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989, when something that seemed forever was suddenly and surprisingly no more. It was unnerving, but it showed how the Mighty can be made of clay.

And, of course, the omnipotent, the omniscient, the ubiquitous Catholic Church was also found to have feet of clay. For me, that was the saddest shock of all.

So, 2017? Just another year? Probably not. Not with The Donald trumping about with his finger on the button and Teresa May and Bumpkin Boris flailing around without a notion.

You can be educated for a job but you cannot be educated for life. Life has its own ways and its own ever-changing rules. Of course, the word is an abstraction: there is no such thing as 'Life', there are simply People – and all creatures great and small.

We all want to live in peace and freedom, but 'Peace comes dropping slow' and 'Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose.' Or is that the pointy horns of cynicism again?

It is still better to give than to receive, to ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country. Forget about trying to work out the meaning of this life. The answer my friend is blowing in the wind...

Just keep going and keep doing something creative, anything – your job to the best of your ability; weeding, growing anything – veg or trees – walking, reading, writing, caring.