

Friday (Teilhard de Chardin)

Theoretically, this transformation of love is possible. What paralyzes life is failure to believe and failure to dare. The day will come when, after harnessing space, the winds, the tides and gravitation, we shall harness for God the energies of love. And, on that day, for the second time in the history of the world, we shall have discovered fire.

Scripture (2 Cor. 4: 5-7)

It is not ourselves we are proclaiming, but Christ Jesus as the Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. It is God, who said 'Let light shine out of darkness,' that has shone into our hearts to enlighten them with the knowledge of God's glory, the glory on the face of Christ. But we hold this treasure in pots of earthenware, so that the immensity of the power is God's and not our own.

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3rd week of Easter

Don't give up the day job – transform it.

I am often grateful to know that Jesus chose Peter as leader because it's clear that being impulsive, slow on the uptake and often getting things wrong isn't a problem as far as Jesus is concerned. The danger with only focusing on Peter's faults, though, is that I can shrug off my own shortcomings as though they don't matter. The key point for Peter is the transformation in his character, and how that comes about.

In John's account of the miraculous catch of fish, (John 21:1-19), the apostles are 'back home' and have, apparently, resumed their work as fishermen. When John talks about it being night, he is saying that whatever is happening is under the rule of 'darkness', i.e. forces opposed to God. Peter takes the initiative – 'I'm going fishing' – acting as though he isn't aware of the presence of Jesus, and his work is futile. As with all resurrection stories, Jesus isn't immediately recognised when he calls out to them, but John signals that something significant by saying 'when it was already light', meaning, 'the new reign of God had already begun'. Jesus, the light of the world, is present and a sign of this is the abundance of fish caught when Jesus takes the initiative and they follow his instructions. The incident shows that Jesus is no longer directly establishing the Kingdom of God, but is working through the apostles, in their ordinary, daily lives. This is emphasised when Jesus, even though he had already cooked breakfast, asks them to bring some of the fish they had caught. (As the incident has a number of reminders of John's account of the Feeding of the 5,000 which is a pointer to the Eucharist, this will add significance to the Offertory at Mass for me).

Peter needs John to point out, 'It is the Lord', but his response is, literally, jumping in. During his conversation with Jesus, he is painfully reminded of his weakness and limitations by being asked three times if he loves Jesus – a clear reminder of his three denials. Clearly, though, his limitations aren't an obstacle as Jesus still wants him to be leader in shepherding the flock. This is not just 'I hope you've learned your lesson' or 'I'll give you another chance', but a sign that Peter is transformed. The prediction that Peter will one day stretch out his hands and be taken where he would rather not go indicates not only that he will die for his faith in Jesus, (where before he had said he'd die but fell at the first fence), but that he will have learned to be obedient to the will of God, as Jesus was, to the point of giving his life.

This prediction also makes clear that the Resurrection did not do away with the opposition which Jesus faced. When the Sanhedrin haul the apostles before them, angry that they had 'filled the whole of Jerusalem' with their teaching, (Acts 5), Peter, the flawed leader, is clearly different to the man who denied Jesus outside the Sanhedrin. His eloquence, and courage, fulfil the promise made by Jesus, 'I myself will give you an eloquence and a wisdom that your opponents will not be able to resist.', (Lk 21:13-15). The risen Jesus, in other words, is present in the apostles, working in them, just as he worked through them in the miraculous catch. Working in their 'day job', Jesus continued to build the Kingdom of God, with obvious power, (the huge catch). A key question is, do we just read about the appearances of the risen Jesus in the early Church, regarding this as a 'golden age', or do we take seriously his living presence so that he can continue his work in us, flawed, inconsistent and doubting though we are. My role is to respond to his initiatives by listening to him in daily life. Martin Bennett

Monday (Martin Luther King)

We need to recapture the gospel glow of the early Christians, who were non-conformists in the truest sense of the word and refused to shape their witness according to the mundane patterns of the world. Willingly they sacrificed fame, fortune, and life itself in behalf of a cause they knew to be right. Quantitatively small, they were qualitatively giants. Gradually, however, the church began to dilute the strong demands of the gospel and to conform to the ways of the world. And ever since, the church has been a weak and ineffectual trumpet, making uncertain sounds. If the church is to regain once more its power, message and authentic ring, it must conform only to the demands of the gospel.

Scripture (Acts 5: 25, 27-30,40-42)

When they had brought them in to face the Sanhedrin, the High Priest demanded an explanation. 'We gave you a strong warning,' he said, 'not to preach in his name, and what have you done? You have filled Jerusalem with your teaching.' In reply, Peter and the apostles said, 'Obedience to God comes before obedience to men.' They gave orders for them to be flogged and warned them not to speak in the name of Jesus and released them. Everyday they went on ceaselessly teaching and proclaiming the Good News of Christ Jesus, both in the Temple and in private houses.

Tuesday(Brother Lawrence)

Let us begin in earnest and come back in full trust to this father of loving kindness. Let us renounce wholeheartedly all that is not of him. He deserves infinitely more. Let us think of him unceasingly. Let us put all our trust in him. I have no doubt we shall soon experience the full effects of doing so, and shall sense the abundance of that grace with which we can do all things.

Scripture (Isaiah 12:2-6)

Look, he is the God of my salvation: I shall have faith and not be afraid, for Yahweh is my strength and my song, he has been my salvation. Joyfully you will draw water from the springs of salvation and, that day, you will say, 'Praise the Lord, invoke his name. Proclaim his deeds to the people, declare his name sublime. Sing of the Lord, for his works are majestic, make them known throughout the world. Cry and shout for joy, you who live in Zion, for the Holy One of Israel is among you in his greatness.

Wednesday (Dorothy Day)

Even if we read the Sunday gospel several times, God sends us a special message for our need. When we began Catholic Worker, we first thought of it as a headquarters for the paper, a place for round-table discussions, for ways of building up a new social order. But God has made it a place for the poor. So many come that it is impossible to give personal attention to each one; we can only give what we have, in the name of Jesus. Thank God for directing our vocation. We did not choose this work. He sent it to us. We will always, please God, be clambering around the rocks and briars, the barrenness, the fruitlessness of city life, in search of lost sheep.

Scripture (John 21:3-7)

Simon Peter said 'I'm going fishing.' They replied, 'We'll come with you.' They got into the boat and went out, but caught nothing that night. When it was already light, there stood Jesus on the shore, though the disciples did not recognise that it was Jesus. Jesus called out, 'Haven't you caught anything, friends?' And when they answered 'No' he said 'Throw the net out to starboard and you'll find something.' So they threw the net out and could not haul it in because of the quantity of fish. The disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord,'

Thursday (Thomas Merton)

The saint seeks not his own glory, but the glory of God. And in order that God may be glorified in all things, the saint wishes nothing but to be a pure instrument of the divine will. They want simply to be a window through which God's mercies shine on the world. And for this they strive to be holy. They strive to practise virtue heroically, not in order to be known as a virtuous and holy person, but in order that the goodness of God may never be obscured by any selfish act of theirs.

Scripture (Psalm 51:1-0-13)

God, create in me a pure heart, renew me with a steadfast spirit, do not thrust me away from your presence, do not take away from me your spirit of holiness. Give me back the joy of your salvation, and my tongue will acclaim your saving justice. Lord, open my lips and my mouth will declare your praise.