

Reflection for the Second Sunday of Lent

Genesis 12.1-4; Timothy 1.8b-10; Matthew 17.1-9

Given that this is Lent, I am allowing myself to assume that we came here to be transformed, am I right? On Ash Wednesday, a week and a half ago, father Richard called us to “a change of heart”, his predecessor, Saint Paul, some two thousand years ago called the Romans to be transformed by the renewal of their minds.¹ (By the way, he used the same Greek word that was used in Saint Mathew’s Gospel to denote transfiguration – *metamorphoo*.)

There is a yearning for something in us, something we may not be able to name, something that we hope will transform us. And Lent intensifies such yearning.

Let us at the beginning separate that yearning from the desire to become some ideal version of ourselves, an ideal that has its source with our own dissatisfaction with ourselves as we come short of some parental and/or societal expectations. Even if that ideal me is pious, compassionate and saintly, it is just a masque, my false-self. If I live according to that ideal, I am a puppet dependent on people’s criticism and praise. Neither can I transform myself, nor, paradoxically, can I help others.

The true yearning that can transform us is the yearning for wholeness. We may call it a yearning for God – it will be the same thing. We want to know ourselves in our totality because that totality can connect us with our Creator – accessing it, we sense, will transform us in such way that we will realize we are like him/her. According to Saint John: “We do know that when it is revealed, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”²

Mystics talk about wholeness and self-realization. Saint Catherine of Siena: “Be what you ought to be, and you will set the world on fire.”³ Anthony de Mello: “Both what you run from -- and what you yearn for -- are within you.”⁴

How do we access wholeness?

¹ Romans 12:2

² 1 John 3:2

³ “If you are what you ought to be, you will set fire to all Italy, and not only yonder.” Catherine of Siena, Letter T368; <https://jennybridgman.wordpress.com/2016/04/29/catherine-of-siena-a-meditation-on-becoming-yourself/>

⁴ De Mello, Anthony. 1998. *Taking Flight: a Book of Story Meditations*. Doubleday, p. 132

Do you remember another passage from Saint Matthew's Gospel, the one in which Jesus calls us to be complete, just as our heavenly Father is complete?⁵ That call to wholeness proceeds his call to love one's enemies and to cultivate impartial love towards everyone, love that imitates the Creator's love, which, quote "makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust."⁶

That all-encompassing and transformative love starts on the level of the self. If you develop a compassionate heart for yourself, you will know yourself more – your own shadow will stop haunting you. You will understand the humanity better – you will see that what you used to despise in others (jealousy, anger, ignorance for example) – is also within you. When you realize that, you will be less prone to indulge in those feelings. You'll simply acknowledge them with a loving gaze.

As a result of this we will have more courage to meet the "other", and maybe even realize that there actually is no "other", the concept of other is obsolete.

Jesus, after his transfiguration, prohibited his disciples to speak about what they had experienced. They did see the glorious side of Jesus and of humanity but they have not yet seen Jesus on the cross - transfigured by people's fear and hatred. One has to know both aspects of life – the glory and the misery – and make one's heart vulnerable to be transformed by both.

In Jesus we have a proof that this can be done.

Ewelina Frackowiak

March 12, 2017

⁵ Matthew 5:48. The Greek word used in that passage – *teleios* – is often translated as *perfect* but the concept of being perfect as understood by modern speakers of English does not entail the idea of being complete – that idea was tied to the notion of being perfect by the speakers of Greek.

⁶ Matthew 5:45