

Reflection for the 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time by Ewelina Frackowiak

2 Kings 4.42-44; Ephesians 4.1-6; John 6.1-15

We came here after a week of heavy headlines: there were deadly fires in Greece, shooting in Toronto, White House tweets threatening Iran with a confrontation. We came here to hear a story of the miraculous feeding of five thousand people by Jesus of Nazareth. Can this reading and this gathering help our anxiety? Are they supposed to? Can we find hope in the Gospel when we seem to lack it within us?

I said “seem” because even when we feel hopeless and discouraged, lacking peacefulness and clarity, all those qualities: courage, hope, peace, compassion are actually within us. We might have lost contact with them or maybe even what’s lost is the ability to recognize that they are part of our inner nature. That the Divine is our inner nature. The stories in the Gospel, the teachings of Jesus and his apostles are here to help us to access what is already within us.

If that was not the case, if all we needed to do was to find the source of love, goodness and peace somewhere externally, then the story we have just heard in the Gospel of John would have ended differently. Jesus would not have tried to avoid the crowd and its efforts to venerate him, to make him king. Who if not him, who let himself be called the Anointed One and Son of the living God¹, should be accepting the power and authority over others? The thing with authority is that we assign it, we project it into others, in moments when we lack internal security, when we are not in touch with our inner foundation. Jesus, the Divine, is our inner foundation. We have to find it within us, not project it outside of us. Each individual in that crowd that came to hear Jesus at the Sea of Tiberias should seek authority within himself, within herself.

Jesus is not someone external. In a few minutes, we will experience that fact through the Eucharist. God of all, as we heard in the passage from Saint Paul, is “through all and in all”.²

But what about anxiety – you may ask - the anxiety I feel when I hear about world events like the one just mentioned? Plus, it is not only peace, compassion, courage that I find in myself, I also have jealousy, anger, greed - what about those? Are those also from the Divine, of the Divine?

¹ Matthew 16.16

² Ephesians 4.6

First of all, anxiety, jealousy, anger and greed are emotions that come and go – hence they do not define you. Second of all, if we refrain from acting out and feeding our emotions with story lines of how things in us and outside of us should be, then our emotions will reveal themselves to us as energy, energy that is good and creative. I know, it is awfully hard to refrain from escalating and from acting out when emotionally triggered. My coworker says something and boom – I am in flames of anger or pangs of jealousy. I usually do not verbally react to my coworker’s words in such situations but what I do is I tell myself a story of how badly and unjustly treated the poor me is. Which fuels the fire in my head even more. Or I just ignore the feeling and get myself distracted. What I need to do is to get in touch with the raw feeling without the story line. Imagine, feeling the energy of anger but stopping shortly of assigning blame to yourself (for feeling angry) and to others (for triggering you).³

It is as if we were each a structure of layers. Like a Russian babushka doll. The stories, the blame, the ideas we have about of who we are are part of the external and ever changing layer. The core of us – our Essence – is indestructible and imperishable. It has all those qualities I mentioned earlier and is always present.

Because we tend to identify with the outer layer and we lose contact with the core, we experience anxiety. We are anxious because we may think that beneath the image of who we are which we present to the world is emptiness. That we are fake. Like anger and any other emotion, the anxiety must be faced and not avoided. Like the other emotions, it will lead us to our core.⁴

Jesus fed the crowds but refused to grant their wish of making him king. By performing the miracle, he signaled that there is another, profound dimension to life, and by refusing to be crowned, he invited us to look for that dimension internally.

³ See also Dzogchen Ponlop, *Emotional Rescue* (Tarcher/Perigee, 2016)

⁴ See Sandra Maitri, *The Spiritual Dimension of the Enneagram* (Tarcher/Putnam, 2000)