



Blessed Be

April 2015

Welcome to the inaugural printing of a spirituality resource from the Grail. In it, we hope you'll find something for your contemplation, ideas to think about, prayers to pray, possibilities for further reading. What is included here has been contributed by various people and reflects the Grail's foundation in Christian faith as well as its openness to the spirituality and ideas of other faith traditions. Should you have anything you wish to contribute, we would welcome it, so please contact the production team at helenmacauley@gmail.com

Helen MacAuley and Anne Day

Having come through the holy days of the Passion and Easter, the first two readings are focused on the humanity and the divinity of Jesus.

A Reflection on a very human Jesus

Dag Hammarskjöld 1951. From *Markings*, 2006. pp.68-70.

A young man adamant in his committed life. The one who was nearest to him relates how, on the last evening, he arose from supper, laid aside his garments, and washed the feet of his friends and disciples - an adamant young man, alone as he confronted his final destiny.

He had observed their mean little play for his friendship. He knew that not one of them had the slightest conception why he had to act in the way that he must. He knew how frightened and shaken they would all be. And one of them had informed on him, and would probably soon give a signal to the police.

He had assented to a possibility in his being, of which he had had his first inkling when he returned from the desert. If God required anything of him, he would not fail. Only recently he thought, had he begun to see more clearly, and to realise that the road of possibility might lead to the Cross. He knew, though, that he had to follow it, still uncertain as to whether he was indeed 'the one who shall bring it to pass', but certain that the answer could only be learned by following the road to the end. The end might be a death without significance - as well as being the end of the road of possibility.

Well then, the last evening. An adamant young man... 'Arise, let us go hence'.

Is the hero of this immortal, brutally simple drama in truth 'the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world'? Absolutely faithful to a divined possibility - in that sense the Son of God, in that sense the sacrificial Lamb, in that sense the Redeemer. A young man, who walks the road of possibility to the end without self-pity or demand for sympathy, fulfilling the destiny he has chosen, even sacrificing affection and fellowship when others are unready to follow him - into a new fellowship.

Assenting to his possibility - why? Does he sacrifice himself for others, yet for his own sake - in megalomania? Or does he realise himself for the sake of others? The difference is that between a monster and a man. 'A new commandment I give unto you: that ye love one another.'

The inner possibility - in dangerous interplay with an external one. The road of possibility had led to the shouts of Hosanna at his entry into the city- shouts which opened up other possibilities than the one he had chosen...

(submitted by Ruth Crowe)

The Motherhood of Christ

Julian of Norwich

The Second Person of the Trinity is our mother in nature. In him we are grounded and rooted. Thus our mother, Christ, in whom our parts are kept unseparated, works in various ways. For in our mother, Christ, we profit and increase, and in mercy he reforms and restores us, and by virtue of his passion, death and resurrection joins us to our substance
God through Christ made himself entirely ready in our poor flesh in order to do the service and the office of motherhood himself in all things.

A mother gives her child milk to suck; our precious mother, Jesus, feeds us with himself. He does so most courteously and most tenderly, with the Blessed Sacrament, which is the precious food of true life.

The gracious hands of our Mother are ready and diligent about us. For he in all this working uses the true office of a kind nurse, that has nothing else to do, but to attend about the salvation of her child.

It is the office of our lord Jesus Christ to save us. He wills that we love him sweetly and strongly. Furthermore a natural child despairs not of the mother's love, and naturally the child loves the mother, each of them loves the other.

The natural mother recognises and knows the need of her child, takes care of it most tenderly, as the nature and condition of motherhood will do. And continually, as the child grows in age and size, she changes what she does, but not her love.

Thus our Lord is our mother in nature, by the working of grace. And he wills that we know it, for he wills to have all our love fastened to him.

All the debts we owe, by God's command, to fatherhood and motherhood by reason of God's fatherhood and motherhood, are repaid in the true loving of God. This blessed love Christ works in us. And this was showed in everything, especially in the noble, plenteous words, where he says, 'I am what you love.'

Jesus Christ, who opposed good to evil, is our true Mother. We have our being from him, where the foundation of motherhood begins, with all the sweet protection of love which endlessly flows. As truly as God is our Father, so as truly God is our Mother.

The mother's service is nearest, readiest and surest. It is nearest, for it is natural, readiest, for it is most of love, and surest for it is of truth. We know well that all our mothers bear us with pain and for dying. But our true Mother Jesus, he alone bears us to joy and to bliss, and endless living. Thus he sustains us within him in love. He would suffer the sharpest throes and the most grievous pains that ever were or ever shall be, and died at the last and when he had done and so borne us to bliss, yet he said these high overpassing words of love, 'If I might suffer more I would suffer more.'

(submitted by Sheila Hawthorn)

During the past Lent , Tricia Gemmell's thoughts turned to questions about spiritual practices.

On the Idea of a Spiritual Discipline

Tricia Gemmel

What exactly is a spiritual discipline? I was reflecting on this the other day after listening to a lecture on how our theological understanding of creation and the universe has changed in recent years and wondering how that changed understanding actually becomes incarnated in our lives. How does one develop a greater sense of wonder in one's life? How does one learn to stop and

stare, to be still and appreciate the great gift that life is? How does one live a simpler life? How does one care for the planet, deeply and consistently? These were just some of the questions I was asking myself. The short answer to myself was that I needed some new spiritual disciplines. But what exactly is a spiritual discipline? We are used to thinking in terms of types of prayers said at regular times, or of penances, fasting and abstinence. However, when I cast my eyes quickly over the past twenty years in search of those regular practices in my life that could be called spiritual disciplines, what sprang to mind foremost was cooking the family dinner five nights a week for years on end, after a busy working day. It looms large in my memory as a haven for mindfulness and mental peace, a solid rock of love and service.

So what makes an activity a spiritual discipline? My initial thoughts: a certain regularity of time and place, an attitude of wanting to be there, commitment, faithfulness, attention and love. I went in search of Adele Calhoun's *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, to see what light she could shed on the matter. Her book contains an overwhelming number of disciplines to choose from. Just about anything seems to be able to lend itself to being called a spiritual discipline if the right conditions apply. I suddenly suspected that many of us have lives crammed with spiritual disciplines without even knowing it!

Calhoun defines them as intentional practices, relationships and experiences that give us space to keep company with Jesus. They are rooted in our desire for God. They slowly transform us. We recognise those that have been with us from the beginnings of Christianity, but every age also needs new disciplines to respond to changing times. What remains constant is that 'they simply put us in a place where we can begin to notice God and respond to his word to us. Spiritual disciplines give the Holy Spirit space to brood over our souls'. What happens because of them cannot be forced by us; we must wait in patience and hope for what we long for. 'In the unfixables of our lives we are invited to keep company with Jesus and take a risk that God's intentions toward us are good.' Calhoun speaks repeatedly of 'the unhurried rhythms of grace'.

I think Lent might be a good time to make a spiritual inventory of my daily life before I start looking for something new.

I would love to hear about other people's intentional practices and how they have been changed by them.

Food, so essential for our physical being, is significant also in religious and spiritual practice. Here are two blessings on food from other traditions.

Traditional Buddhist mealtime prayer

This food comes from the earth and the sky.
It is the gift of the entire universe
And the fruit of much hard work.
I vow to live a life that is worthy to receive it.

Wiccan source

Blessed be the earth for giving birth to this food.
Blessed be the sun for nourishing it.
Blessed be the wind for carrying its seed.
Blessed be the rain for quenching its thirst.
Blessed be the hands that helped to grow this food,
to bring it to our tables
to nourish our minds, bodies and spirits.
Blessed be our friends, our families, and our loved ones.
Blessed be.

An adaptation I made from the above I find good for centring and opening a meditation session.

Blessed be my family and friends.
Blessed be the people I work with.
Blessed be the animals that walk the earth
that swim in the sea
that fly in the air.
Blessed be the plants that transform the sun's energy.
Blessed be the water that we drink.
Blessed be the air that we breathe.
Blessed be our solar system.
Blessed be our galaxy.
Blessed be our universe.
Blessed be the Spirit that moves in and around and through everything that is within our universe.
Blessed be.

After reading Tricia's piece above, I came across Deepak Chopra's 'The Third Jesus' and thought that others might also be interested in his interpretation of Jesus' teachings. Raised in a Hindu family but in a multifaith neighbourhood, he sees Jesus as coming to teach people how to reach the God-consciousness.

The Essentials of a Spiritual Life

Deepak Chopra. From *The Third Jesus*, p.23.

These are the ingredients that Jesus taught to be the essentials of a spiritual life:

Meditation – going within to contact the silent mind
Contemplation – reflecting on the truth
Revelation – receiving spiritual insight
Prayer – asking for higher guidance
Grace – taking God into one's heart
Love – participating in divine love
Faith – believing in a higher reality
Salvation – realising you have a place in a higher reality
Unity – becoming one with God..

And remember –

From Bhagavad Gita 4:11
Whichever God you worship
I will answer your prayers.
Whatever oath you take
I will welcome you.
(submitted by Helen MacAuley)

We hope you have enjoyed our little publication. In future, we will send it to those who would like to continue to receive it.

We hope to use email as much as possible. If you wish to receive it by email, please reply to helenlmacauley@gmail.com

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