

Gospel Reflections

Reflection on Mark 4:35-41

- 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B – 21st June '15

This beautiful Gospel is the story of our entering into the *darkness*, that place of Faith and a place where we are invited to confront our fears and *trust* the One who is there with us. What a difficult journey this can be. It is a foreign land to us initially and can be frightening and seem so risky. Our very life can feel threatened. And in a way the life we have lived to this point is threatened because it is being invited to die so that Love may now live more fully within us. This is the essence of Death and Resurrection.

Too often we proclaim Faith when all we are really doing is believing in a set of dogmas or teachings that have been set down or handed down to us without us ever entering into the lived experience of what Faith really is. We can just believe what we have been told and name this as Faith. Or we can think it is Faith because we seem to be given everything we ask for particularly in the material sense. We must ask ourselves what is the root of our Faith– why do I believe? What we see in today's Gospel is the beginning of this lived experience of Faith. When Faith is real it will enter us into the *darkness* in one way or another and it will feel like we have crossed into a foreign land. We too will feel the fear, the floundering and the powerlessness we see present in the disciples today. The disciples lived experience must also become our own lived experience.

It seems though that we can only enter into this experience when we know at some level that Jesus is with us even if he seems to be *asleep*. There needs to be an established relationship with Jesus, or the Spirit of Love, Source of all Being, or the Cosmic Christ (or whatever name you want to give this Mystery we often name as God) for us to accept the invitation that Jesus offers us today. The ego self has no capacity or will to journey into this *darkness of Faith* – it is the last thing on earth it wants because it knows that it will be diminished in this Mysterious process. So the ego self resists this journey with great intensity. We can be so blind to this resistance while at the same time blindly believing and proclaiming we are real people of Faith.

It is this relationship with this Mystery that awakens the deep longing present in all of us that then draws us into the *experience* of Faith. John of the Cross in his beautiful poem *The Dark Night* begins by saying: *One dark night, fired with love's urgent longings – ah, the sheer grace!* At the time it may not feel like *grace* and we cannot come to know this *experience* as a *grace* until we really enter into it – until we give it our 'yes'. Mostly it is only in retrospect that we will come to recognize that this *grace* permeated everything.

If we do not open into *love's urgent longings* and learn to cry out to this Mystery living within us while we experience ourselves in this *darkness*, we will not come to know the *quiet* and *calm* the disciples experienced in the midst of the chaos they found themselves in. The temptation for all of us is to think we can travel this Mysterious journey on our own. It is impossible! The ego self will run a mile in the opposite direction once it feels any sort of threat or fear. So often we have pain or suffering or fears of one sort or other and we forget to bring it to this Source of our Being – we forget to cry out to Jesus for help. But we must learn that our cries for help will always be heard. It doesn't mean they

will be answered in a way that we might expect, but through repeated experience we will come to know and trust that this cry is always held in Love.

This *quiet and calm* the disciples experienced in the midst of their fears was the Heart of their prayer – it was here where they could experience what it was to surrender their fears. The disciples are bewildered by it all then Jesus asks them a most confronting question and Jesus asks us the very same question: *How is it that you have no faith?* It was only here in this very real experience of their own lack of *Faith* that they came to see more deeply the Mystery of Faith. The disciples find themselves in *awe* of this experience and yet they still do not know who Jesus is: *Who can this be?* they ask themselves. They are immersed in Mystery. They now know their own lack of Faith and what an extraordinary gift this was for them. We too must come to know our own lack of Faith and learn to journey in and through it in the company of Jesus. We cannot boast of what we do not know and we must learn to know how limited our knowing is. All we can do is surrender into the *quiet and calm* (the silence) and trust the Mystery we encounter there - and it will always be Mystery.

Ruth Burrows in her book *To Believe in Jesus* says this: *It often seems to me that what, from outside, seems to us sin and wickedness – violence, crime, drug-taking, sexual promiscuity – is not so in God's sight. Is it any more, I wonder, than the frantic screaming of a child in the frightening darkness of the night?...But perhaps our faith is weak. Perhaps we pretend there is no darkness and therefore never know the need for this cry. Jesus knew it on the cross. He faced the darkness and met it with this cry. Or perhaps, faced with it, we have not the heart to cry; our faith fails and we deny our Father. Page 47/48*

This *cry in the darkness* is relevant for all of us - perhaps even more so for those of us who proclaim to have Faith. Martin Laird in his book *Into the Silent Land* says: *In the Crucified and Risen One, grace and disgrace have been joined. Because of this, our failure opens onto the luminous vastness of our depths, where Christ silently presides in the unfolding liturgy of our wounds. Page 132*

How profoundly beautiful are these words to ponder over the coming days?

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