

Week beginning 29th March 2015

Have you the courage to be?

There have been times when I feel as though I'm driven into a corner, whimpering like a whipped dog. One thing after another, one person after another seems to plan for me another pathetic day. When I'm given the grace, for an instant, to move outside my fear, to look at myself from beyond the reach of my anxiety or panic, I suddenly see how I have allowed myself to be victimised by all and sundry. I have handed over to others the responsibility for my own life. . . This drifting away from the safe anchor into unsafe waters can happen quite suddenly. I have forgotten my fine heritage – a proud cultural and religious tradition. When I begin to remember this and the divine powers of birth and baptism at my disposal, I feel a stirring deep within me. It is a glorious sensation – to realise oneself to be the inheritor of the gifts of creation and the grace of incarnation. . .

Now with an unholy greediness I open my being to the gift of courage. I storm heaven for it. . . A quiet power fills my soul. The courage to trust, to trust wildly and without caution, to take big risks, to become quite foolish and imprudent in my confidence in God, to stop being careful all the time, to become the faith I profess. I try to incarnate my belief in the fifth gift of the Holy Spirit (fortitude) into my very psyche. . . This is pure gift but while the initial awareness of God's closeness provides, for the moment, the list and spirit we need, it takes much longer to actually become the grace of fortitude. . . Are we motivated by fear or love? Is fear to be fought against and banished or, like any other emotion, is it to be integrated and transcended? How do we feel the fear and do it anyway? Where and what is the gift in fear? . . . The cycle is broken by calling in, as Jesus did in the garden, the angels of God. We come from a long line of spiritual heroes and heroines – 'the cloud of witnesses', prophets, confessors, apostles and mystics.

To feel the fear, and then to face it, is to be empowered. It is as though the angels of light are waiting until the fundamental opposition is made, before pitching in behind the brave one. . . There is another face of mystery here. Full and fearless commitment enlists the energies of all the positive forces, urging, drawing and inspiring the questing soul onwards. A little more of Goethe's spirit would do us a power of good:

'Whatever you can do

or dream you can, begin it.

Boldness has genius,

power and magic in it.' (Travelling Light pp73,74)

Follow-up -

If you would like to explore mindful meditation, try this simple daily praxis:

Before the chatter-box of your mind is switched on, find your usual quiet place and posture. Gently shut down the flow of your thoughts, as you would dam a stream, so as to see more clearly the river-bed through the still water. . .

Surrender yourself to God's dream for you. It is a dream of strength. Trust that grace and courage will fill your life from now on. Today, you face the fear in your life. You do not judge yourself for being frightened, or condemn yourself for being a coward. In your still soul, you invite into your depths the courage of God. . .

'I can do all things in him who makes me strong.' (St Paul) Every morning I pray St Patrick's Breastplate with its words of power. 'I arise today through a mighty strength, the strength of the Trinity, of Christ's resurrection, of love, of nature, of God's strength . . .'

You will be aware of the change in your physical sensations, your pulse rate and your energy, when the surge of this grace of fortitude courses through your body and soul. (Travelling Light p 75)