

## Week beginning 19th April Can you let go of fear?

Fear ranks as the most immobilising of human emotions. Many people see fear as a wall that closes in on them. As they approach the wall, fear increases and movement stops. They turn and retreat. Fear becomes a power of limitation. But it can also become a prelude to illumination. It can trigger bouts of endurance, fortitude and determination. Once we realise that fear is nothing but an obstacle to be scaled, it can be used to our advantage. Fear is subdued, first with confrontation . . . The process of doing this, of moving towards the void of fear, of breathing into it, is a huge part of the quest for the true self. As with anger, once we enlist and utilise the energy of fear in our own favour, we move along our path to wholeness with swifter feet. Each time you seek out the features of fear, you find a face behind the face, behind the face. Eventually you are led to the truth. It is as though the shadows of fear are the spaces into which true love has not yet entered. That is why perfect love casts out fear. And that brings the fine grace of courage to the soul.

Since most of my shadow stuff is about fear I often use this Breather when the light grows faint. It grows faint when I hear, from somewhere deep inside me, those warning voices, from parents and neighbours and seminary sermons, 'Don't do it. Play safe. Hold tough. Be a sound man. It's too risky. Be prudent. Don't be different. What if you fail?' This reflection is about taking a deep breath and saying yes to life, about believing in myself, about being aware of my anxiety and fear yet still being authentic and integrated. It is a time for reminding myself of my guardian angels, those most wonderful rays of God's protective light.

It is then that I hear another voice whispering in my soul assuring me of my infinite value and worth, of my preciousness in God's eyes, of my immunity from being damaged or destroyed beyond swift recovery. 'If you should find yourself in the valley of darkness or walking across the barren desert or sense the presence of the devil, no evil will you fear because I am there, loving you into your hero-heart.' This is what I tell myself - that I can work miracles (Jn 14;12). In trust I claim the self-confidence and power, hard-won by Jesus in a terrible death so I can be free. The quite unbelievable truth is that all I have to do is not to stop God's awesome love from transforming me. I simply let it happen to me, flow through me, encompass me. It is only love that transcends fear. . . Only fear stayed nailed to the cross. 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name. You are mine. When you take on the swirling rapids, you will not drown. When you walk through the leaping flames, you will not be burned. You are precious in my sight.' (Is 43)

(Travelling Light pp 80,81,82)

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

Let today's meditation be a moment of thanksgiving for those who have loved you and love you still. As you light the candle and listen to the music, hold them in your heart. With each deliberate breath send them a blessing and a prayer of gratitude. The hearts and bodies that love you are the sources of the courage that empowers you to face your shadow, your sins and your terrors. They are the ones who make divine love tangible. Without people to hold us, the night is too dark, the forest too sinister and the journey too long and lonely. Try to embody your thankfulness as you breathe in and breathe out. This is a high form of mutual empowerment, of graced presence to each other. The mystic Meister Eckhart preached that if the only prayer we ever said was 'thank-you', it would be enough. Not one breath of love, not one heartbeat of gratitude will go to waste.