

Week beginning 9th August – Live in the present

It is extraordinary how much time we spend worrying about future possibilities or regretting things from our past lives. We waste huge amounts of precious energy over useless anxiety. No wonder we feel drained and tired so often. This reflection is another reminder about coming to your senses, literally – to what you are currently seeing, hearing and touching. This is the safest and surest place to be. No one can harm you if you abide in the here and now. It is also the meeting-place between you and the God called I am; the only moment of encounter between our spirits and the Spirit of all life. It is uniquely in the here and now that the pen-point of God's love writes on the page of our humanity, as the divine drama of incarnation unfolds. . .

At dozens of workshops that I have either organised or participated in, tired people seem to be worn out from trying to be good, striving to be better, proving their worth and therefore, competing with either themselves or others. Our religious upbringing has often contributed to this malaise. We were told that we must earn and merit God's love. Too much talk about God's unconditional love for us, it was felt, would make us all careless and irresponsible, sending us wildly out of control, abusing and taking for granted this tender, divine love. Jesus would not agree. . .

Three hundred years ago, Jean Pierre de Caussade SJ reminded his students that no moment is trivial since every moment contains 'a divine kingdom and heavenly sustenance' within it. . . Such unconditional surrender to God's will as revealed in each passing second requires immense trust. Yesterday when the sun shone and my spirits were high, I found myself trying to lock into the moment and preserve it forever. That is not the way to live in the present, where we take it on trust that the future can be safely left in God's tender hands. We know well that we are incapable of faith like that, but once we risk pushing out the boat, the wind of the Spirit blows with unexpected intensity. For now, if you are not already familiar with this belief and practice, I encourage you to reflect on it. The present moment is the only truth. It is where everything good happens. It is free from the memories and fears that keep blotting the sun from our lives. Our guardian angels guard it safely. But we must find it. It takes vigilance and costs not less than everything.

(Travelling Light pp153-155)

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

The temptation to give up on the fixed time for meditation each day will be great. This inner discipline can be difficult and demanding. Our minds are like jumping monkeys and hyperactive grasshoppers. So sit or lie down again and, this time, notice, as you do so, the sensations and pressure points in your body, in your feet touching the floor, or back touching the chair, the tension in your face, the warmth where your limbs are folded over – elbows, back of knees, armpits. Can you bring your attention to any part of your body that you decide? . . . Gently acknowledge all the thoughts, images and feelings that cross your mind and heart, and quietly let them slip away. Simply continue to do this. Maintain your awareness of what is going on in your mind, heart, body and breathing . . .

Let there be a flow about this kind of mindfulness. It has a power for conditioning us positively and profoundly. This conscious awareness will have a tremendous effect in the quality of your presence to everyone, and to everything throughout the day ahead. You will, of course, if you are anything like me, keep forgetting. Patiently, begin again.