

## Week beginning 10th May - Transform the negative cycle

How do I transform the negative experiences of life into light and energy? How do I reconcile and redeem what is sinful and hurtful? How do I become an alchemist, changing the dull lead of my days into pure and shining gold? . . . It is the life-work of those who yearn to be 'other Christs' by sacrificing their egos completely, taking on themselves 'the mind of Christ'. Raised up with our Lord on the cross, they purify and draw all things to God. The theory and practice of this reflection are both crucifying and exhilarating. To be a reconciler is to be one who fully lives out the dying and rising mystery of Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

When I succeed in being a reconciler, instead of reacting to, resisting or reflecting back the negative emotions and attitudes of those around me, whether in a one-to-one, communal or wider context, I take into myself the jealousies, cynicism, bitterness and hurting of the people and the systems of my community. Like a recycler, a holy incinerator, a reconciler, I filter, through my redeemed essence, I transform, in my very own self, like Jesus did, the sins into graces, the curses into blessings, the destructive forces into life-enhancing gifts. We're at the heart of the matter here. So often, when someone hurts us, all we do, either in self-justifying anger, forced politeness self-righteous correctness or condescending forgiveness is to add to the negative vibrations by turning them round and re-directing them in an even more deliberately negative way, back the way they came . . .

It takes a big soul to avoid complicity in the scapegoating which is happening in churches and states today, to unite the suffering of our lives with the passion of Jesus, to burn out its own and others' evil in the ego-less emptiness of its own holy space. I'm sure this is what Thomas Aquinas meant when he described the greatest virtue as that of magnanimity, a largeness of heart, big enough to be always forgiving and understanding. This is what brings light into the world. . . .

This is slow and risky work. Sometimes all I can do is smile at the mess I make of this lofty option. But I've reached a point now of not taking myself too seriously, of knowing there's no such thing as getting it right always in this life, of not letting my constant failures and sometimes doubtful motives, stop me from forever continuing to try. At the end of the day, this reflection is about compassion; it is only compassion that will transform the negative cycle. . . . It is hard to be a reconciler. But we have no option. . . . All of this is uniquely the work of God. (*Travelling Light* pp92,93,94)

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

Today's meditation is about 'blessing ourselves', a phrase familiar to all Catholics, so as to be ready to continue on our demanding journey and to travel light. The Sign of the Cross is a most powerful ritual. Slowly trace the symbol that is stronger than death or evil across your mind, body and heart. In the Christian tradition, you are placing yourself under the protection of the Blessed Trinity, of the Creator and Sustainer of Life, of the Saviour of Humanity, of the Spirit of Love. Bless yourself a few times, deliberately, prayerfully and courageously. As you touch your forehead and chest, in the Eastern tradition you are opening the brow and heart chakras of vision and compassion. According to Jewish esoteric practice, as you touch your left and right shoulders, you are activating the spiritual centres of mercy (chesed) and strength (geburah). . . These mornings, as I awake, I make the Sign of the Cross with a sense of power and dignity that I never had before.