

**Week beginning 6th September -
Nota Bene: You are called to be authentic, not perfect.**

It is difficult to travel light when burdened with the goal of perfection. On a journey where risk, letting go and openness are the only spiritual compasses to hand, the attainment of perfection is a dubious destination. . . Perfection does not consist in the secure possession of the 'state of grace', the perfectly balanced mind or the finely-tuned, tanned body. We are led astray by the holy allurements of perfect integration, total harmony and 'having it all together' just as surely as by the false attractions of the devil. We have survived the seductions of the 'body-beautiful image only to spiritualise the same materialistic narcissism into the equally deadly trap of the 'soul-beautiful' image. We are betrayed by both images. In their blind and urgent immediacy, they twist our bodies and souls out of true. Because all we can ever hope for is to be authentic.

That is why self-awareness, to be present to each moment, is about as far as we can go. Whatever way we are, that is the way we are. When we sin, we sin. When we get it right, we get it right. When we are off-balance and excessive, we are off-balance and excessive. Such are the colours, shapes and contours of authenticity. Balanced perfection only happens at the infinite horizon, God's other home from where the panoramic view of how it all fits together is clear. . .

Against the background of ultimate perfection, we must always be losing our own balance. Without such a loss, not even the tiniest step could be taken – a condition of rigor mortis would prevail. Usually we are only true, authentic (and therefore perfect) when we know we are lost. In the context of the mystery of salvation, it is the safest place to be.

It was a dull, flat February morning. Susan, the teacher, had gathered the reception class around me. We had just watched the acting-out of the Parable of the Lost Sheep in the school hall. Now, back in the classroom, they were telling me, in turn, why they had chosen the various parts they played – the ninety-nine who stayed secure in the sheep-fold, the brave shepherd who went out searching, the readers of the parable and so on. Finally it was Laura's turn, the little girl who had volunteered to play the part of the lost sheep. 'I wanted to be lost,' she said with a small smile, 'so that someone would come and find me.'

. (Travelling Light pp 172,173)