

## Week Beginning 8th February 2015 Take the Second Take

I have often felt so angry with myself for allowing some truly unimportant remark to colour my mood for a ridiculously long time; especially when I believe that, in most situations, no one can hurt us without our permission. . . The arrival of appropriate perspective brings a restored balance to our thinking and feeling. This reflection asks, 'Are you over-reacting? Is it truly that bad? Taking the long view, how awful is it really? In fact in the cold light of day, does it, in fact, merit all that intense emotion?' The wise people tell us that the recovery of perspective is the first strategy in regaining our emotional balance so as to act maturely. . .

I have often felt so sad at the fact that innumerable people in the second half of their lives are consumed with bitterness and self-destroying, deep-seated emotions over previous lost opportunities, broken hearts, deceits and betrayals. . . A time comes, I believe, when, in such instances, it takes small miracles of loving to bring back wholeness. At a more everyday level, however, we need a second take on the reason for our premature panic because the first reaction is usually thoughtless, groundless and irrational. In the realisation that we have unthinkingly and inappropriately become the reaction, the healing happens. . .

It is so important to understand this as this alone can bring immense peace and healing to tortured souls. . . Baptised, redeemed and continuously graced as we are, we still keep forgetting that we have a free choice in the encounters and happenings of each day. I can choose to be grateful, for instance, even when parts of me are steeped in hurt and resentment. It is amazing, too, how many opportunities present themselves when I choose gratitude instead of complaint. I can choose to be grateful, for example, when I'm criticised, even when part of me is responding with bitterness. I can choose to speak about goodness and beauty, even when part of me is looking for someone to blame or something to call ugly. I can choose to listen to my inner voices that forgive, and express it outwards with smiling eyes, even while I still hear whispers of revenge echoing in one of the empty halls of my heart. Today you will have many occasions to take the second take!

(Travelling Light pp 44,45)

### Follow-up -

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

At meditation today, try to make your being still by paying attention to the physical feelings and sensations of your body, and the thoughts and images in your mind. Notice the pattern of your breathing as you exhale and inhale slowly and mindfully. As you feel the peace flowing through you, gently anticipate the challenges that will try to take it from you the moment you leave the place of prayer. . . Visualise the particular person who is likely to say something hurtful, harsh or cutting to you. When this happens, you can be sure that you will initially feel the sudden negative emotion of anger, embarrassment or fear. Even the most enlightened saints reacted like that. But almost immediately, they became aware of what was happening in them and they allowed the emotion to die away. They did not recycle the negative energy back to its source. They 'breathed into' it and, with a fine and blessed strength, they let it go. This transformation, this alchemy, is a kind of miracle. And because Jesus said so, you too can achieve that miracle. And it is so important not to be disheartened if you feel you are making little headway. No effort goes waste. Even our failures are harvested by God. And through it all, the healing and the purifying continue to grace our lives.

(Travelling Light p46)