

Tenth Set - 4. Blessed are the Reconcilers

To be a reconciler is to be one of those who forever endeavour to flesh out in their complex lives the pattern of dying and rising to the mystery of Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Instead of reacting to, resisting or reflecting back the negative emotions and attitudes of those around them, whether in a one-to-one, communal or wider context, they take into their own vulnerable spirit, like Jesus did, the arrogance, hardness and stubbornness of those they lead or serve or live with, their jealousies, cynicism and strange motives. This is costly spiritual work. It is the occupation of the saint.

When I pray to be a reconciler I'm praying for the death of my all-powerful ego. I'm praying for the grace to transform, within my own body and soul, within the most redeemed part of me, the sins into graces, the curses into blessings, the destructive forces into life-enhancing gifts. In our imitation of Christ the experience of redemption can come no better than this. So often, in our daily routine of getting hurt, what we usually do, either in self-justifying anger or self-righteous brotherly or sisterly 'correction', is to add force to the negative energies, by turning them round and directing them with still greater velocity, in an even more subtly negative way, back to the source from which they came.

There is an extraordinary power in the manner in which the very physical presence of Jesus unite opposites through the peace and love that encompassed him; 'In his own person he destroyed the hostility.' (Ephesians 2:16). Jesus had learned that if the small and unsatisfied ego is not transformed, then the negative emotions of envy, fear and hate will be either denied or projected elsewhere. We are indebted to the Franciscan priest Richard Rohr for the phrase 'What we don't transform, we transmit.'

It is so hard to carry the burden of our own flawed humanity. Only the true essence, not the ego, can cope with such anxiety, such ambiguity, such fragile insecurity. If our pain is not transformed by reference to a wider horizon, to a regaining of a true perspective, to a letting-in of God's vastness, it will always be transmitted to others . . .

I find making the sign of the cross over my mind, body and heart to be a deeply reconciling little ritual. As you touch your forehead and chest, in the Eastern tradition you are opening the brow and heart chakras of vision and compassionate understanding.

According to Jewish practice, as you touch your left and right shoulder, you are activating the spiritual centres of mercy (chesed) and strength (geburah). In the Christian tradition we open ourselves to the influence of the Blessed Trinity, to the creator and sustainer of the world, to the saviour and reconciler of its sins, to the healing spirit of new beginnings. In the end it is the Cross alone that will hold the opposites together and transform them. And only the light will then be transmitted. When I bless myself, the world is blessed.

(Already Within)