

They had no idea...what it was

I sense the urgency of the Holy Spirit, with 7.5 billion humans now on the planet at the same time. Our future is either nonviolent or there is no future at all.

Richard Rohr, Franciscan Priest and contemplative

And I would add, that to live in this kind of world with no idea of what it is, is itself catastrophic. So how do we get there? To this understanding?

I think the first step has to be to take a complaining spirit and incomprehension in others and in ourselves seriously. Why?

Because when the culture of this kind of thinking gets a hold of us, it resembles in an alarming way, the kind of feeling experienced by people who seek closure by pushing hard for vengeance against those who have murdered their spouse, or their son or their daughter. The kind of people that stand outside prisons that promote capital punishment and cheer when the perpetrators are dead. The irony of *that* is, that there is no closure. That the feeling of deep resentment just keeps gnawing away at the entrails without end.

Because a vengeful, angry, complaining, unforgiving and ungenerous spirit and ultimately *fearful* spirit, not only *can't* find a way out, in its lashing out at everyone and everything it ends up destroying itself.

For at its core lies a powerful self-engrossing fear—a fear of the ‘other’ and a repugnance of the ‘other’ who is different from me, or who has offended me. Or more often than, is actually just like me only I’ve magnified it so much I can’t see myself in others anymore.

It’s that attitude we all struggle against: the jaundiced view of things and how it clings to an attitude that sits in judgement of everything and everyone. It’s a viewpoint that works from **unexamined assumptions**, and so constantly ends up drawing **the wrong conclusions**. An outlook on life that basically says that no one is good enough, that everything perhaps even God is against us when things don’t go our way. A perspective that cries out with the resentful Israelites:

“Why didn’t God let us die in comfort in Egypt where we had lamb stew and all the bread we could eat? You’ve brought us out into this wilderness to starve us to death, the whole company of Israel!”

Or a complaining voice, as in our parable, that can only see **unfairness** and totally misses the point that **the employer** who decides to pay everyone equally, does so out of **a spirit of generosity**. If you look at the **context of our Gospel reading this morning** (and usually those who live an unexamined life, never questioning the assumptions they make about others and about their situation, also never think through the **context** in which an issue presents itself and so never truly understand it)—when you see the context of our Gospel reading, you realise that Jesus is addressing his disciples’ complaints

that they they're not seeing much return for the perceived sacrifices that they've made. An attitude which of course calls into question their core motivation for doing what they are doing. Jesus says to them and to us:

'Friend, I haven't been unfair. We agreed on the wage of a dollar, didn't we? So take it and go. I decided to give to the one who came last the same as you. **Can't I do what I want with my own money? Are you going to get stingy because I am generous?**' "Here it is again, **the Great Reversal**: many of the first ending up last, and the last first."

I'm sure even the slowest and hardest of heart among the disciples would have got what he was trying to say that day and us too this morning. Basically, if we are serious followers of Jesus, we will accept the fact that God's values will always completely turn our self-centred values on their head.

I can think of no better example of this stinginess of mind and heart which Jesus speaks of, than the smallness of mind evoked by Theodor Dostoyevsky's portrait of the resentful person in *Notes from the Underground* it kind of makes you cringe as you read it.

...our offended, beaten down, and derided mouse at once immerses itself in cold, venomous, and above all, everlasting spite. For forty years on end it will recall its offence to the last most shameful details, each time adding even more shameful details of its own, spitefully taunting and chafing itself with fantasies. It will be ashamed of its fantasies, but all the same it will recall everything, go over everything, heap all sorts of figments on itself, under the pretext that they too have happened [... PAUSE] and forgive nothing. [PAUSE] It may even begin to take to revenge, but somehow in snatches, with piddling things, from behind the

stove, incognito, believing neither in its right to revenge itself nor in the success of its revenge, and knowing beforehand that it will suffer a hundred times more from all its attempts at revenge than will the object of its revenge, who will perhaps not even scratch at the bite. On its death bed, it will again recall everything, adding the interest accumulated over time.

Dostoevsky's is a frightening, truly frightening scenario of mind into which we can all slip without even knowing it.

But the big question for me and for you, and for our community seeking to be People of Christian faith, encouraging connection between the Divine and the everyday and modelling the unconditional love of Christ—if this is truly going to be our aim—then it will demand of me and you, our community at the Cathedral a deep cultural change, a radical and great reversal of values, of thinking about ourselves others, about others within our community and the community beyond the Cathedral.

The question is HOW? How do we do it? What kind of discipline of mind will it take to be that kind of disciple?

If we are going to be like Christ, going to be like God, then as in our OT reading we're going to have to be as patient as God:

“This evening you will know that it is God who brought you out of Egypt; and in the morning you will see the **Glory of God**. Yes, God’s listened to your complaints against God.”

The answer lies in training’ disciplining ourselves as in constantly every day every moment re-aligning ourselves with the God who goes on listening, goes on forgiving, goes on loving: ‘the glory of God’, the glory of God that teaches us to listen, and to see the other.

Richard Rohr, the Franciscan priest and theologian has so much to teach us on this. Citing John Dear, nonviolent activist and author, he notes that

Living nonviolence requires **daily meditation, contemplation, study, concentration, and mindfulness**. Practicing nonviolence means claiming our fundamental identity as the beloved sons and daughters of the God of peace, and thus, going forth into the world of war as peacemakers to love every other human being. . . . The problem is: we don’t know who we are. . . . **The challenge then is to remember who we are, and therefore be nonviolent to ourselves and others**. Living nonviolence requires daily meditation, contemplation, study, concentration, and mindfulness. Just as mindlessness leads to *violence*, **steady mindfulness and conscious awareness of our true identities** lead to *nonviolence and peace*. The deeper we go into mindful nonviolence, the more we live the truth of our identity as sisters and brothers of one another, and sons and daughters of the God of peace. The social, economic, and political implications of this practice are astounding: if we are sons and daughters of a loving Creator, then every

human being is our sister and brother, and we can never hurt anyone on earth ever again, much less be silent in the face of war, starvation, racism, sexism, nuclear weapons, systemic injustice, and environmental destruction.

Most of our conflicts arise from a very fragile sense of the self. When we're full of fear, the enemy is everywhere. We endlessly look for the problem outside of ourselves so we can expel or exterminate it. If a prophetic peacemaker attempts to take our chosen object of hatred away from us, we turn our hatred on them. Jesus, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and many others were persecuted or killed because they challenged the myth of scapegoating. If we don't own our own evil, we will always project it elsewhere and attack it there.

Only people who recognize their own evil, or at least their complicity in evil, stop this unconscious scapegoating pattern.

Their experience of radical union with God makes it possible for them to own their own shadow, their own capacity for evil, and not need to hate it in other people. Fully conscious people do not scapegoat; **unconscious people do almost nothing else.**

Experts tell us that the deepest wound of PTSD is a "moral injury," that is a wound to the soul, caused by participation in events that violate one's most deeply held sense of right and wrong.

The perpetrator or victim realizes how wrong it was. The irony, of course, is that this “disorder” is actually an appropriately normal response to an overwhelmingly abnormal situation. **No wonder medication and talk therapy are less effective in addressing this “moral injury,” researchers say, than Yoga and meditation, which by-pass the mind and unlock the unconscious wounds of the spirit, where the core wound of PTSD resides.**

Richard Rohr’s experience of teaching Centering Prayer in prisons for ten years supports this conclusion. **Receptive, contemplative practices like Centering Prayer are uniquely suited to healing deep psychic wounds of this kind.** [4] Centering Prayer bypasses the mind with its horrific memories and trauma and invites practitioners to “detach” from their narratives and “let go” into the spaciousness of Silence. It is there they can encounter God or Divine Reality through the deep longings of their hearts. The silence pulsates with a compassion and warmth that other remedies cannot replicate. The deep sense of moral injury and shame no longer needs to be repressed. They can begin to forgive themselves and feel like they just might be lovable after all.

cf., Franciscan spirituality cf., Leo and Glenys are oblates, and the Retreat Centre on Raymond is thinking of practising it too.

Those are powerful thoughts...encourage people to come to the contemplative service tonight...at 5:00pm to practice this art (plus Monday night prayers Wednesday morning meditations 7:45 and finding your ways and times (KYB, helping others listening to music, listening to people in hospital, sorting books) and Thursday evening 5:30, and as we come to our eucharist this morning, if we feel betrayed let us learn from the One Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God Son of humanity, who was betrayed, but loved with an undying love. And who as we come to partake of his being, his body and blood, renews us to be who we really are: better than our worst thoughts and actions...and to become the children of God, sisters and brothers together, mirroring the love of God in Christ.

I finish with Angelina Jolie's attitude to life, from which we can learn. As she straddles two diametrically opposed worlds, she is inspired by the spirit of survival. She says that the grace and humility she saw in the Cambodian people along with the lasting effects of the genocide threw Hollywood life into unflattering relief. She remarks: "Once you get exposed to what's really happening in the world, and other people's realities, you can't just ever not know, and you can't ever wake up and pretend it's not happening... Your entire life shifts...the real will to survive and the strength of the human spirit and the love of the human family becomes so present, and that's how we should all be living..." She finishes with this final realization: "I

never expect to be the one everyone understands or likes. And that's ok, because I know who I am, and the kids know who I am."

Let us pray:

Lord make me an instrument of your peace
Where there is hatred let me sow love
Where there is injury, pardon
Where there is doubt, faith
Where there is despair, hope
Where there is darkness, light
And where there is sadness, joy
O divine master grant that I may
not so much seek to be consoled as to console
to be understood as to understand
To be loved as to love
For it is in giving that we receive
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned
And it's in dying that we are born to eternal life
Amen

