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Daily Reflections



WHAT SORT OF MAN IS THIS?

By David C. Robinson, SJ

Today's Gospel

As Jesus got into a boat, his disciples followed him. Suddenly a violent storm came up on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by waves; but he was asleep. They came and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" He said to them, "Why are you terrified, O you of little faith?" Then he got up, rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was great calm. The men were amazed and said, "What sort of man is this, whom even the winds and the sea obey?"

MATTHEW 8:23-27

Reflection

Throughout the Gospels, the Disciples and those drawn to Jesus are overawed, confused, enlightened, and inspired by the multitude of ways in which 'power'

is manifested in his teaching, his healing, and his compelling presence among the people. Each social, cultural, and religious community anticipates a unique outcome from his words and actions in the unfolding of his mission. Some expect a military messiah who would galvanize an army to overthrow the oppression of the Romans. Others hope for a 'miracle worker' who would move among the poor and abandoned, curing their illnesses and making them whole. Still others look to his 'word,' spoken as a rabbi among the people, to purify and clarify their life as people of the mosaic Covenant that binds them together as the chosen of God. Other expectations grow out of these frameworks.

In reality, he is none of these, yet his connections among those inhabiting his world work to transform all of them. The source of his power is neither military acumen, nor medicinal magic, nor universal religious wisdom. His ground and source is his intimate connection to the love of God, which animates and manifests his work in the world. Our commonplace notions of 'power' are rarely linked to such a profound and unmeasurable reality. For Jesus, this Love heals the servant of the Centurion, or the fever of Peter's mother-in-law; it opens the eyes and hearts of the faithful, and those of their leaders who are not ensnared in legalism. Jesus' relationship to the world does not merely bring Love to who and what surrounds him, but transfigures the entire reality he encounters. This does not mean he becomes a source of miraculous magic, but rather that he opens a different world of spiritual awareness to all who receive him.

We are invited to this same transformation in our spiritual walk with God. We learn to relinquish our expectations of what the power of Love means for us, within us, and around us. We are daily invited into a richer and more expansive reality, whose meaning is not a product of our desires or imaginings, but is instead a discovery of the ways Love makes 'all things new.' We do not 'learn' what Love is or does, but awaken to the ways in which we become that Love in every time and circumstance. We finally are born into the reality of the great teaching in Acts, when Paul speaks to the Greeks in the Areopagus of Athens, saying, "God is not far from any one of us. For in him we live, and move, and *have our being.*" (Acts 17:27-28). This wisdom is embedded in the 6th Sunday Preface of the Mass, that we pray on a regular basis. What is our 'being in God' but the ever-illuminating Love that has been our heritage and legacy from and for all of time? The Disciples are constantly unfolding into the Love of Jesus in every encounter with him, and in every circumstance of their journey with God. Our invitation is the same.



Image by Pete Linforth

For Pondering

- How do you experience your personal growth into a fuller life in the Love of God?
- In your walk of faith, have you learned more about your way of loving from the life and ministry of Jesus?
- How do you communicate your own evolving knowledge of love to those dearest to you?

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