

What Does God Want Of Me?

Coming on the heels of our meditation on vocation last week, the question at the top of the page is quite personal and specific for each one of us; the answer to it will be tailored to each of our lives. Can we express it in general terms that will help all our different responses?

Get Free!

What God wanted of the Israelites in Egypt was that they should work with him to free themselves from Pharaoh. At first Moses found them impossible to inspire: he could not reach them, *so bitter was their subjection and so crushed their spirit*. I think that God still wants his people to be freed from what crushes them and embitters them. Do you want to lose your chains? Of course: but do you want to lose your chain-*smoking*? Do you want to lose your addiction to *drink*? Do you want to be freed from the *bitterness* you keep so fresh and green, towards the vile relative who offended you 20 years since, towards the burglar who robbed you so heartlessly, the scandal-monger who blacked your name, the colleague who pipped you for a post, the drunk driver who killed your friend? The licking of wounds is bitter consolation, and it can give shape to a whole lifetime: what a slow and wasteful way of sculpting your eternal soul! Do you believe you can grow to be free of the strait-jacket of your past? Do you want to be free?

Grow In Holiness

God has given you many gifts of holiness: the power to believe, trust, hope in him: above all, the power to give yourself in love. But the gifts of God are never static, external possessions that drop out of the sky like blobs of mayonnaise falling onto a poached salmon. They are living gifts, gifts that make you yourself come anew to life. You can believe more, trust more, hope for more, and love more than you thought you ever would. But do you want to? It sounds draughty and frightening, and not my sort of thing at all. *I'm not a saint*, we say. *H'mm. And never will be*, says the Guardian Angel, *with an attitude like that!*

Grow In Knowledge

Some people have very closed minds, which feel as if they're set in concrete. *I've made my mind up*, they say, *and I'm not changing it*.

The eternity of God, however, is not shown by human thinking that is set in concrete. God himself likens his Wisdom to a dancing girl - graceful, lissom, and at play. Gaining knowledge and understanding takes us beyond our limitations, and helps us to soar. To *love* truth is essential if we're to be at peace with our lives; this means welcoming it at all times, never turning away from it, or refusing to hear it; if something is true, it comes from God. However, the telling of truth requires that we do it in words that seem to come from God; truth used as a weapon against another human being is not properly used, and the telling or hearing of truth sometimes requires long prayer.

Welcome God To Your Life

Today Jesus gives me, I think, an amazing picture of what it is like to go beyond myself, and to become like God. At first he is training his disciples to accept the Cross: laying down life, losing earthly life in favour of the eternal promise of God, is too frightening for them to understand. But then they turn to their ugly conversation about personal ambition and dominance: *which of us is the greatest?* There is no way forward there. So Jesus does a most surprising thing. He asks to borrow a baby, and he does what all of us do when we receive one: he falls silent, knowing that this little one is speechless, powerless, vulnerable, lacking in credentials, achievements, or any of the contaminations we suffer from; yet Jesus is holding in his arms, not just the image of God, but all the potential of a beloved child of God. He knows that in welcoming all that potential to grow, to change, to inherit life, he welcomes the presence of God the Father. What a leap of imagination from our Lord! How we can learn from this insight, as we look at the people around us. They are limited and enslaved and imprisoned in so many ways: yet they have the potential to be freed by God's adoptive love, to inherit eternal life in Christ. We have the amazing privilege of sharing in that liberating work, of giving one another the encouragement we need to believe and trust, to hope and love. At our Sunday Mass this week we will promise to be for two little girls a community of endless, eternal hope: never by word or deed to lessen them, and never to leave undone what will help them eternally to grow. *Fr Philip*