

PALM SUNDAY

20 March



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Luke 22: 24-30

A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. But he said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

'You are those who have stood by me in my trials; and I confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

REFLECT

When I first left the big cities for Australia's north someone said 'that's great, you can stay for a year and it will look excellent on your CV'.

For successful folk can't spend too long out of the main game.

Anywhere else is to be travelled through briefly to mine for experiences that can be used to benefit us back in the real world.

A packaged tour of the absolute to steal Annie Dillard's term.

However if we duck the tour bus mentality and spend long enough in the desert the seemingly unchanging surroundings force a massive change in us.

We let go of the illusion that we are somehow more special than others.

Surprisingly, one day, we are even glad to be rid of it.

For we are free like we have never been before.

*Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes,
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries.*

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

If the ordinary things are now shining with the glory of God, then we live among unimaginable riches.

Everything has turned on its axis.

Jesus says the gentiles call those in authority benefactors, literally *the ones who do good* in Greek.

We too look upwards for models of a good life.

However the grand adventure is often downward, in the eyes of the world.

It is into what seems ordinary and everyday.

A group of grumbly Israelites wandering around a backwater desert has had more lasting influence than any of the centres of power and importance at that time.

Jesus came out of the desert and set out on the path to the cross.

He hung around with the ordinary people, he told stories about ordinary things, and he died the most ordinary of deaths.

Teresa of Avila ends her description of the sublime joys of the interior mansions of the soul with the prosaic:

The devil sometimes puts ambitious desires into our hearts, so that, instead of setting our hand to the work which lies nearest to us, and thus serving Our Lord in ways within our power, we may rest content with having desired the impossible.

Interior Castle

And so we are sent out to do whatever is at hand.

For what may appear ordinary is life in the kingdom, right now, if only we have eyes to see it.

SAYINGS



Image courtesy of Michael Leunig

Do not forget that the value and interest of life is not so much to do conspicuous things...as to do ordinary things with the perception of their enormous value.

Teilhard de Chardin
Letters to Two Friends

[The Desert Fathers and Mothers] insisted on remaining human and “ordinary”. This may seem to be a paradox, but it is very important. If we reflect a moment, we will see that to fly into the desert in order to be extraordinary is only to carry the world with you as an implicit standard of comparison.

Thomas Merton
The Wisdom of the Desert

PRAY

The hardest thing in the world, they say, is to be where you are.

Rowan Williams
Christ on Trial: How the Gospel Unsettles Our Judgement

It can be very hard to live in the ordinary.

A daily prayer practice is one of those ordinary things that have power beyond imagining.

If you don't already have one, take the Lent practices that have been most helpful to you and combine them into a regular prayer practice.

Set aside a time every day, show up, stick with it through boredom, confusion and doubt, and God will teach you how to pray.

May God lead us kindly through these times, but above all, may God lead us to himself.

*Dietrich Bonhoeffer
Letters and Papers from Prison*

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

Do you value the exceptional? Or the ordinary? Why?

Do you look upward for models of the good life?

Have you ever experienced something that previously seemed ordinary suddenly appearing full of the glory of God?