



## Living with the Spirit of Christ

An address for the Cosmic Mass ● 24<sup>th</sup> August 2008 ● Rev Lukas

*I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.*

*Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:*

*"Death is swallowed up in victory."*

*"O death, where is thy victory?"*

*O death, where is thy sting?"*

*The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*

*1 Corinthians 15:50-58*

Paul introduces this section of his letter to the Corinthians by saying 'Lo! I tell you a mystery'. The Greek language scholars say that the word used here for mystery, *musterion*, is a word that primarily relates to that which is known to the *mustes*, that is, to those who have been initiated into the sacred mysteries. It does not mean something that is 'mysterious'. In this context it relates to knowledge and experience gained through initiation. It indicates a truth that has been revealed.

What follows in the Scripture reading is a summary of the teaching of St Paul. It speaks to us of the evolution of the human being and the transformation of the physical material body to spirit body. And of how it is the Lord Jesus Christ who gives us this eventual victory over the material body and death.

It is the last part of the Scripture reading that I want to focus on:

*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.*

When reading this I had to ask myself the question, 'How do I know that my labour, and my life, are *in the Lord*?'

When Paul writes 'therefore, my beloved brethren', the word beloved is formed from the word agape. We know intellectually that agape love is the love that is expressed once our will has been spiritualised, when our will is not being used for useless purposes. Mario used to say that it takes practice to be a Christed person, and to love with agape love.

## The Need for Individual Reflection

Ideally then, the way to proceed in life would be to act and make decisions when we know we are in the spirit of Christ. However, because of where we are in our evolution and spiritual development, this may not happen very often or may come in fleeting moments. Often we need to act without being certain. But these moments of being inspired by spirit do come, because Christ is now in the world and is in us.

I thought I would reflect on some moments when I feel inspired by Christ or have an experience of spirit. I have come up with some examples. We all have an individual soul nature with different needs, and different ways of developing, different karma. So I am not suggesting these examples are relevant to you. Fortunately, there is no standard template, in our culture anyway, into which we all need to fit.

The first example is **meditation and prayer**. By becoming still and experiencing harmony in our thoughts and feeling life, we can sense the presence of spirit. We can sense our spirit continuing in time and eternity. Even if we only experience this for a moment, and it may not occur each time we pray or meditate, what a great way to start the day.

**Study and contemplation** of good spiritual writing: for example, reading Rev Mario's material or the work of other initiates. It is esoteric Christian writing that inspires me. Reading this kind of material can lift our spirit and expand our consciousness to that experienced by the writer, even if only for a moment.

**Experiencing art and music**. A trip to Europe certainly gives an opportunity to see the great works of art. There is something about the visual arts of painting, sculpture and architecture that provide evidence of spirit and human evolution.

I was fortunate enough to see Leonardo da Vinci's painting 'The Last Supper' which covers a wall of a refectory in a former Dominican monastery in Milan. The painting itself is brilliant, of course, and knowing something about how long it took to complete and how dissatisfied he was with the figures of Christ and Judas made it fascinating to see. But the thing that inspired me was to see this painting on the wall at one end of the room and then to turn around and see on the opposite wall of the refectory a fresco of the Crucifixion painted by another artist, a contemporary of Leonardo. This other fresco is painted in a very different style, one that was popular and traditional at the time.

Comparing these two different styles was very moving - the quality and almost living consciousness that exudes from the Last Supper was astonishing, whereas the traditional style of the other was nice, but from a different era. Da Vinci clearly was painting with his consciousness in the new era, moving forward into the consciousness with which we live at present, whereas the other artist was painting with a consciousness that seems to be looking backward into the consciousness that was being left behind.

To me this experience indicated the reality and beauty of the individual human spirit, in this case Leonardo da Vinci's, and the reality of the evolution of consciousness.

**Contemplating the lives of inspiring people**. The word 'in-spiring' is so close to the words 'in-spirit'. What I mean by contemplating inspiring people is reading about the lives of great spiritual individuals. But it can also mean appreciating the more day to day wonders that are in front of us, for example, the way a child develops and gains the ability to speak and use language. These simple wonders of life can be missed. It is so easy to forget the miracle of life - one's own life, the human being and the wonders of creation.

How much must Christ love and appreciate the human being to have entered into incarnation with us?

This leads to the last point on my list, which is the **contemplation of Scripture**, and for me that usually means the New Testament and the life of Jesus Christ. In doing this we can gain a deepening relationship with the spirit of Christ and begin to recognise the presence of Christ in this world and within ourselves.

These are just a few examples of how I experience spirit and Christ. These experiences may be fleeting, but in the words of Christ as recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke:

*The Kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.*

### **The Good Shepherd**

The development of a relationship with the spirit of Christ is most beautifully described in the Gospel of St John, chapter 10:

*Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber, but he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens, the sheep hear his voice and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.*

Later in chapter 10 of John's gospel we read how Christ identifies himself as being the Good Shepherd:

*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.*

### **The Need to be Conscious of the Thief and the Robber**

Even in this comforting picture of the Good Shepherd who cares for and loves humanity, there is a warning that we as an individual need to take responsibility for our spiritual welfare. We read that there are two other characters, or perhaps one character with two qualities - a thief and a robber – that need to be taken into account. In the Greek these are *kleptes* and *lestes*. The thief or *kleptes* is the one who steals in secret. He is the one who presents as being good but in fact is the liar. The other, *lestes* the robber steals more openly like a bandit, the 'catch me if you can' type.

These can represent two different forces in this world that aim to lead us away from the Christ: the force with hidden ulterior motives that on the surface appears good and spiritual but is a great liar - and the other, a more openly seductive and misleading force present in the world.

The more we become conscious of the presence of Christ and recognise his voice and trust this loving guidance within us, then the more we will recognise the thief and the robber and become discerning in our life choices.

Then like Paul we can be confident and steadfast and experience the abundance of living our lives with the spirit of Christ, always knowing that our labour is not in vain.

So shall it be.

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