



## To make the able more able

An address for the Cosmic Mass ● 31<sup>th</sup> August 2008 ● Rev Robert John

*In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of every human being. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

*The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the human will, but of God. And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.*

*John 1:1-5, 9-14*

Good morning. A special welcome to Rev Antoinette and Colleen who have travelled to be here, and to you, Ann, who has travelled to be here. It is great to see you all.

The reading I have chosen this morning is from Ephesians chapter 3. It is a prayer that Paul is praying on behalf of us, each of us as individuals and us as a community as a church.

*For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fulness of God. Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.*

*Ephesians 3:14-21*

I decided today that I would like to focus on a precept that is fundamental to our life together as a spiritual community. A precept, a spiritual principle, foundational in the life of our Centre and one that we have worked with quite a lot in various forums in recent times. This precept is the principle of 'making the able more able'.

I did some research on this and thought perhaps Mario had said something really inspiring and enlightening. I came across a document that supposedly had something to do with 'making the able more able' and found this amazing quote that hit me. I am not sure it has a lot to do with 'making the able more able', but I stood out for me. In this chapter from Mario's Deliberations on St Mark he said to each one of us: "You have mad a muck of things in the heavens". I thought. "Oh... it wasn't quite what I was looking for!" But it certainly got my attention! We have mad a muck of things in the heavens.

The context for this is when he spoke about the passage in Mark's gospel that has to do with 'giving to Caesar what is Caesars'. (Mark 12:17a)

Mario says:

*You have come into this world because you bloody well deserved to come to the flesh. You have made a muck of things in the heavens. Do you think that the Lord has sent you down into this world to take it easy, or to have it easy? He sent you to learn a particular lesson, the lesson is how to handle your own affairs. If you cannot handle your own affairs in the world, how will you be able to handle the affairs of the kingdom of heaven?*

The work of learning to handle our life and our affairs here in this earthly incarnation is quite a challenging thing that he places before us. For if we can't do that there is no way we are going to be able to handle the things of the spirit. Part of the work of us becoming more able is learning more about the capacity deal with the affairs of our life here in this world as a basis and as a foundation for spiritual unfoldment. Ableness first and foremost begins with living in the flesh, living well here on this earth, here in this world and establishing a very real basis for the working of spirit.

The Centre motto of 'making the able more able' is something that we can indeed apply to ourselves and within our own being. It is not just about our relationships with one another. First of all it needs to be about our relationship with our own self. What is it that is able within us? If we can identify that for ourselves - and it will be different things for each one of us, and for each of us that ability may be different things at different times at our life. But what is the able within me? What is the able within you? And by identifying, by working with it, by making use of it, and manifesting it you become more able, we each become more able.

In his Deliberations on St Mark, Mario wasn't just saying you need to take into account the earthly life and then swiftly change his direction back to the things of spirit. He talked about money, what you do with money, what you do with your money, for if you can't actually look after your money then you are no use to spirit. If you can't just turn up to things on time, you are no use to spirit. If you can't deal with the basic things in your existence then the spirit is unable to work through you. You are unable, incapable of being a living expression in which to manifest the power of Christ here in this earth. That is quite a challenging thing for us to consider for there are areas where we are not able, where we have a degree of ability but more is needed. We can each identify these things and work to develop them. By identifying the ability that we do have, and by working with that, it is added to, it is strengthened. However, that work begins first and foremost here in the flesh.

Cast your mind back to creation, and if you can't consciously remember creation (!), remember what you have read about it in the book of Genesis. Because there in the creation story we are told that we are created in the image of the divine. That lets us know that within our earthly existence. within our flesh lies a spiritual identity and that which connects us with the spiritual worlds. Living in the flesh we have to be very connected with the work of actually being present in our lives, but we also have to be mindful of the spirit that makes itself manifest in our earthly existence.

Trying to decide what scripture readings we would have today, I had to rewrite the Greek that I learned some years ago and try to come to grips with how to look up 'making the able more able' in the New Testament.

The word for 'able', the word for 'ability' is the Greek *dunamis* which is often translated a 'power', sometimes it is translated as 'might', and sometimes it is translated as 'able' and 'ability'. We have heard that spoken of in the past and we know the words we have in English that come from that root: dynamite, dynamism, dynamic. That is a hint to us about what our

ableness needs to be. It needs to be dynamic. We need to be dynamic, we need to have the power to change things, to shape. Sometimes that might be demolishing something within ourselves to make way for the new. Or it might be mining for the riches of our being through the spiritual power that comes to us in our ability.

The word *dunamis* means more specifically 'power from action', and it is power from the action of the divine in us. In the reading from Ephesians in verse 16 we read:

*...that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man,...*

So that power is granted to us by Christ, and it is strengthened within us by Christ. But it needs to be there. We have the task of establishing the beginnings of ableness, the beginnings of ability within us, if Christ is going to empower that, and empower us that we may work with spiritual power in our life.

In verse 20 Paul says:

*Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly...*

Here Paul links two things together. *Dunamis* which is 'ableness', 'power', 'might', with the word 'work' *energeia* and often Paul talks about the word 'power' in relation to 'work' and the work of power within us.

There is a strong connection between 'ability' and 'working', and we can probably tell, even if we haven't studied Greek, something of the nature of that working from the Greek word *energeia*, 'energy', 'vitality'. So if we look at the New Testament and the classical meanings that have been connected with the use of the word *energeia* we get a much fuller sense of what it means to be working with the ability within us. This word *energeia* is used to describe that which is abundantly, radiantly and vividly alive. We need to work with those things within us that are abundantly, vividly and radiantly alive. It describes action rather than inaction. It is used to talk about a person who is on duty in their profession or their calling. It is about being ready for action being ready to respond with that we are called to live out. It is used in a military sense as well to talk about being 'in active service'. It is talked about being industrious, efficient and fit for active service. It is used to describe a vigorous attack, an effective weapon, a march that is made with rapidity. We need to be active, we need to be effective, we need to be vigorous and we need to be able to move in our lives with speed to respond speedily to the challenges that confront us. It is also used in relation to agriculture, where *energeia* is used to describe land when it is cultivated and therefore productive. It is used to describe a mine in which mine minerals are produced. A mine that hasn't been worked out, mined out, as yet. It is used to describe money and capital but isn't just left laying somewhere but is actually used and invested in order to generate interest. It is used to describe a mill in working order, and it is used to describe that working day rather than the sabbath day which was a day of rest. These all give us insight into how we can work with the ability, the power, that we identify within ourselves.

The working, or power, or ableness within us is about vitality, activity, efficiency. It is about effectiveness in our activity. It is about action that produces results. It is about action that produces the desired and purposed result. It is about action that is actual, not just potential. This word is used about those gifts and qualities within us that we have actually already manifest. Not the ones that are there and might manifest if we get round to it, or when circumstances suit us.

This word *energeia*, this working of power this working of ableness is about the demonstration of our inner characteristics through our deeds. And through the character that

we build up and express in our life. It is about goodness and efficiency combined to produce effective and purposeful action in our being and living.

*Energeia* talks to us about something that has been done actively, purposefully, consciously rather than something that is suffered or endured or experienced. We are required to be engaged in our lives, to be engaged in that which we do. Not to be victims or helpless or swayed by the things that come to us, but to deal with our lives.

In verse 17 we read as Paul prays for us:

*...and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...*

And the 'dwelling' that Paul is talking of relates to the Greek term meaning 'permanent residence' – permanent rather than temporary residence. It is about us building a permanent place for Christ within us, not just something temporary where we respond one moment because of an impulse within us, and then forget about it. Then there is no longer any dwelling place. We use the word 'abiding' in that sense don't we. It is about Christ's presence abiding with us in an ongoing and permanent manner. It is about us inviting that presence, because Christ doesn't enter into our being through force. He responds to our openness, our readiness and our invitation to him to abide. In the reading from the Prologue that David read to you, you all know the words:

*...to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God...*

We need to invite Christ in to our hearts. We need to receive him, and make our hearts and our minds a permanent, abiding dwelling place for his presence, for in that ability will be given to us power to exercise our divine inheritance, that image of divinity established within our being at the very creation of this world.

Paul goes on to talk about this presence of Christ strengthening that ability that is within us. One of the ways in which we strengthen Christ's abiding presence is through sharing in the mysteries of bread and wine. Often we use words when we distribute the bread and the wine, words like 'may Christ be strengthened within you', 'may the presence of Christ be strengthened within you', 'may the presence of Christ continue to grow within you'.

As I mentioned at the beginning, this passage is a prayer that Paul prays. It is a prayer for unity. It is a prayer for unity within self. It is a prayer for unity with one another. It is a prayer for unity between groups and nations. A prayer for unity between the flesh and the spirit, between the heaven and the earth. It is a prayer for us as individuals, and it is a prayer for the community of Christ, his church.

Paul, we know from his writing, has an image of the church which he describes as the body of Christ. We are the body of Christ. He the head, Christ the head, and we, the members, that body that live and work and function in unity and according to the purpose that is being bestowed upon each one of us. For us to be that body of Christ we must be able, we must be active and purposeful, we must be effective in what we do and what we manifest. Only then is the spirit of Christ fully manifest in this world. Christ is the head, the consciousness, and we are the body that through our work and through our ability give expression and manifestation to what that consciousness the immensity of that consciousness holds. To do this though, we must be able, for then to our ability Christ will add his ability, his dynamic power. To make the able more able.

Remember the parable of the talents, and how the talents get dished out, and someone gets one and someone else gets five, and someone else gets ten, and there is the reckoning a bit

later on what people have done with the talents. Towards the end of that parable, Christ says:

*For to every one who has will more be given, and he will have abundance;  
but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away.  
Matthew 25:29*

To make the able more able within us we have to establish our ability to live in this world with a consciousness of Christ's presence shaping and forming and directing our expression and our living. When we establish that ability within us, when we build that ability within us, then greater ability, greater power will be added.

May we strive to make ourselves more able, for then Christ can add spiritual power to our ability, then we can truly become his active, living, purposeful presence in this world. Then we can be the body of Christ.

So shall it be.

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