



Wholemaking Acts of the Will

An address for the Cosmic Mass ● 12th October 2008 ● Rev Louise

"And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: 'The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. "I know your works; you have the name of being alive, and you are dead. Awake, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God. Remember then what you received and heard; keep that, and repent. If you will not awake, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you. Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. He who conquers shall be clad thus in white garments, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life; I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

Revelation 3:1-6

Good morning and welcome to the service. The priesthood has spent the last few days in Adelaide in Conclave together. The theme of the Conclave was *A Wholesome Life: the wholemaking force of Spirit working in our lives in the 21st century*. It was a time to focus on healing, spiritual healing and wholemaking, at this point of time in our evolution.

Each morning we began our day with the Cosmic Mass and I conducted one of these with Rev Frans from Holland and I'd like to share with you some of the reflections from the address from that Mass.

The Prodigal Son

And he said, "There was a man who had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that falls to me.' And he divided his living between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living. And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything.

But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants."' And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

*But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to make merry.
Luke 15:11-32*

One of the themes we considered at our Conclave was the consciousness soul; that part of our soul which expresses the will – our spiritual actions and deeds. One way of entering into the story of the Prodigal Son is to see the spirit at work in the will and actions of those involved – of the younger son, the elder son and the Father. We can also see the importance of the will in how wholemaking was brought about.

The story of the Prodigal Son is such a rich story, full of beautiful images. It is also a story of the journey of our souls – finding our way back to the Father, returning to our home and, perhaps we could say, reconnecting to the higher self within us.

There are a lot of questions I have in my mind about the younger son and what motivated him to leave and take what was his. Why did he separate himself and ask for his father's property to be divided? What did he want for himself? Did he have some hopes and dreams? Did he want something different for his life, to be independent? Was he rejecting his home and family, perhaps thinking he didn't need these relationships anymore, that he could make it on his own?

It certainly seems that he had to learn the hard way what was important and what was of value to him and where he needed to be to have his needs met. He immersed himself in a particular kind of life, and this may have given him a certain kind of freedom for a while, but ultimately things weren't turning out so well for him. And then we have that beautiful phrase:

But when he came to himself...

We have a sense here of a turning inward, of looking to himself, of seeing himself, of coming to know himself. He became able to see the state he was in and to acknowledge this with his voice and with his words. He became clearly aware of the kind of life he was living and of the situation he was in. He also had the knowledge that something else was possible for him.

He speaks...

Firstly he made a statement about his intention. He spoke his intention, and he acknowledged to himself what he had done and the situation he was in:

I will arise - he would stand up

And go to my father - and he would move

And I will say to him: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants." He would speak to acknowledge what he had done.

He said what he was going to do and then he did it, he acted! He expressed his will. He arose, he went to his father and he spoke. He acknowledged his situation, took responsibility for the condition of his soul by confessing his sin. These are old-fashioned words, but to acknowledge and take responsibility for his soul and how he came to be in this condition gives him the power to make a change. He became able to act – and so he did. An act of his consciousness and will sees him return to himself and his home.

We could say that his sin was to lose contact with his spiritual self, to lose connection with his spiritual home. We see a picture here, in this story of the Prodigal Son, of what it is to

lose contact with the higher self, the I AM. It is to live a life without purpose and direction; it is to live a life in a state of want and need and worse, with no way to have those needs met – no one would give him anything. When we have lost our connection with spirit our needs can never be met; when we have connection with our spirit there is no need that cannot be met.

To re-connect with our spiritual home is also to have a vision of our higher or spiritual self, it is to see ourselves as we truly are. The elder son had difficulty with this:

The Elder Son

"Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.' But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, 'Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"
Luke 15:25-32

Some of us might experience some sympathy for this elder brother who is angry at the way his brother is treated when he arrives home. He is resentful, and perhaps jealous; concerned about what he might miss out on. But his father says, '*Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.*' There is plenty. There is no limit for those who live in a consciousness of the spirit. We might call it a consciousness of the kingdom of heaven.

His response shows that his years of obedience to his father had not been a loving service but had more a quality of grim duty. It was done, perhaps, with a sense of expectation of what he would receive in return. He seems to be saying it is unfair, unjust and undeserved. The way that the elder son has used his will is perhaps more for himself; for what he will receive in return for himself. He is not able to see the joy of the homecoming.

Again we are confronted with our capacity to see clearly from a spiritual point of view. Do we focus on what we think we will miss out on, on what we think we deserve. or can we see the joy and the vision? Where for each one of us it can be said: all that is mine is yours. This is not a realm or a consciousness where there is a limit and if one receives another misses out.

Forgiveness

This story of course gives us a profound and beautiful picture of forgiveness. There is no recrimination or condemnation from the father but celebration. There was no going over the sin, dragging over the details, pointing out the mistakes, the harm done and the feelings hurt. There was only a real spirit of forgiveness – fully and wholly. A reconciliation, a rejoicing. This is one of the ways in which the father uses his will – in forgiveness.

In the commentary from William Barclay on this parable he tells a story about Abraham Lincoln. During the Civil War between the north and south of the United States, Lincoln was asked how he was going to treat the rebellious southerners when they had finally been defeated and had returned to the Union of the United States. There was an expectation that Lincoln would seek revenge, but instead he answered, "I will treat them as if they had never been away."

The forgiveness was complete and full; it was to forget the sin. It was to only see the higher at work, to only see the spirit and to rejoice, to only see the Christ at work.

Death to Life

One of the things that struck me about this passage were the words: *for my son was dead, and is alive again*. Dead here is essentially speaking about stultification. The passage that was read from Revelation, the letter to the church at Sardis, reads: *You have the appearance of being alive and you are dead*. This tells us that there are aspects of our being which have stultified, which live in the past and rely on old ideas and forms. Here in the story of the Prodigal Son we have one who was dead coming to life again. Through reconnecting with a spiritual vision and his spiritual home he is rich and alive in his soul.

What ideas do we have about ourselves and one another that limit us, keep us in the past? Are we holding on to old ideas and forms rather than moving into the new and the challenging? What is old, what has become fixed or outmoded or stultified within us can be revived. What is dead within us can be brought back to life – with the expression and action of our will.

This story is one of hope. It is a story of the power of knowing who we are, remembering where our home is. Keeping connected to the true vision of who we are and where our home is brings what is dead and stultified within us back to life.

And this life can flow from us. What we have built up in ourselves, the spiritual content of our soul, can flow from us creating life around us. If we see the spirit at work in ourselves and our lives and around us then we can be a source of healing and wholemaking.

What we bring

Our capacity to see, to perceive the Christ at work is important in this period of evolution. If we don't see it, who will? It is an act of will to perceive the spirit at work and the kingdom of heaven.

When he arrives home the younger son has some things brought to him. His father says: *'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry...*

He is given the finest of things – the best robe, a ring, shoes - and he is fed with the best of what there is to offer. He is not just accepted back to resume as of old – he is given more in the way of gifts. *To him who has more is given and he will have abundance...* (Matthew 13:12). His strengthened and renewed connection with his I AM results in greater gifts, greater capacity and power. He is able to receive more and build more in his soul; to strengthen the contents of his soul when he connects with his spiritual and higher self.

What do we bring, what flows from the content of our being? I'll conclude with the Prayer of St Francis. In this prayer we can dedicate ourselves to bringing healing and wholemaking and blessing; to bringing whatever is needed, to ourselves but also to others and situations. This 'bringing' is an act of the spiritual will.

*Make us, O Lord, the instruments of your will;
Where there is hatred, let us bring understanding;
Where there is despair, let us bring hope;
Where there is discord, let us bring harmony;
Where there is ignorance, let us bring knowledge.
Make us, O Lord, an instrument of thy peace.
Where there is hatred, may we bring love;
Where there is wrong, may we give the spirit of forgiveness;
Where there is error, may we bring truth;
Where there is despair, may we bring hope;
Where there are shadows, may we bring light;
Where there is sadness, may we bring joy.
Grant, Lord, that we may seek to comfort rather than be comforted;
To understand rather than be understood;
To love rather than be loved.
For it is by giving that one perceives;
It is by self-forgetting that one finds;
It is by forgiving that one receives;
It is by dying that one awakens to eternal life.*

So shall it be.

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