

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Sep 13th 2015

The gospel reading today is very powerful. We follow Peter as he recognizes Jesus as the Christ then to a moment of struggle, questioning and doubting and finally Jesus affirming the need for surrender.

First, Jesus is inviting us to answer the question “Who do you say that I am?” Do we know Jesus as the Christ? Do we think Jesus is human? Divine? A symbol? An example? Take a moment and consider “Who do you say that I am?”

My answer to the question of who Jesus is has been evolving the past few years. Today, I would say that, primarily, I am in relationship with the Christ within, calling me to transformation and union. In the language of Thomas Merton and Richard Rohr, I am being invited to let go of my false self and move to a place of functioning out of my True Self. Another way to say this is to turn my whole self toward God, the Christ within.

Once we can name who we think Jesus is, we can then begin to consider what that means for our lives. What difference will knowing Jesus make in our life? Jesus suggests to Peter that it is going to get hard, the journey is going to have moments and times of great suffering. Peter balks at this. How do we balk at times of suffering in our lives? As we travel our spiritual journey toward the Christ within, it will get hard sometimes. Our friends and family will not necessarily be encouraging us to embrace change. Change itself is difficult. The world wants us to be of the world and live out of our egos accumulating more money, more things, more friends, more status. The Christ within calls us to simplicity, less, dependence and union with god, a life of living with and for others. Will we balk or will we surrender?

Jesus, in the last part of today’s reading, is encouraging us to persevere, to surrender. “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it.” He is asking us to let go of our ego desires and to live out of the place of the Christ within, not out of the world.

This reminds me of Ignatius’ Suscipe :

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding,

and my entire will,

All I have and call my own.

You have given all to me.

To you, Lord, I return it.

Everything is yours; do with it what you will.

Give me only your love and your grace,

that is enough for me.

This is such a hard prayer to pray from the heart. Today, can we trust in the unfailing love and presence of God to surrender our ego to the Christ within?

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