

Reflection for Seventeenth Sunday of Trinity. Mark 9: 30-37

It is often useful to look back and see what comes before the prescribed passage. It helps to put the passage into context. Some of the disciples, but not all, have been witness to the event that we call the Transfiguration. They see Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah. They see Jesus in a new light. Then they come down the mountain to see that some of their colleagues have been unable to heal a demoniac, which Jesus is able to do. They move on, trying to be inconspicuous, whilst Jesus is teaching them about what must happen in the future.

As they make their way along there is discussion among the disciples as to who is the most important. If ever we begin to wonder about the gospels we get these glimpses of totally human behaviour, something we are aware of, something we experience. Who is more important? Who is the best? We all know it, we have been there; we have been party to it – petty rivalries! Jesus is aware of their conversations. He tells them that “Whoever wants to be first must be last and be servant of all. To emphasise His point, He places a child in the middle of the group. Jesus is drawing a parallel between Himself and this small child. He is saying, if you want to be powerful and of a high status you will find it difficult to welcome someone like me. We seek status and position and the rewards that come with it. We want to be important. In any group there are always those who push themselves to the front to be noticed, to be seen. Jesus is teaching us all the concept that our humanity rebels against, that out of weakness and vulnerability comes a greater strength and nearness to God. Jesus is born, not in a palace or even a house but in a humble wayside shelter, weak and vulnerable. Jesus shows us the nature of God. We see His Power in His healings and other miracles, in His teaching with authority, in His resurrection where He is able defeat death, to defy an ignominious execution that was supposed to end everything.

Jesus sets a child among us, weak and vulnerable with no knowledge, no fancy education, but simply trusting and accepting. This is how Jesus asks us to be, like children trusting and vulnerable. Out of the weak comes the strong! We study, we try to understand, to be learned and knowledgeable but in the end, or may be all along, we simply to have to trust. This is what faith is; trusting in those things that are there but that we cannot fully comprehend. We cannot define love, but we know it exists. We cannot define God, but He is there for us, we know He exists, so we must trust.

*Loving God,
we pray that you will give us the grace to be humble,
to serve others with love,
and to become more like children
in our trust and dependence on you.
May we always remember that true greatness
lies in serving others,
and may we strive to live our lives
in a way that honours this truth.*

Amen