

Christ wants our every act to be carried out in his own presence as companion and witness, and for this reason: that his personal inspiration may influence us for good, while his constant partnership may cause us to refrain from evil.

A reading from St Maximus of Turin which we heard a few weeks ago. When Luke recounts the story of the sending out of the seventy-two disciples he no doubt has his own conversion and discipleship in mind. Somewhere, at some point, he too had found himself inspired by others, by their example and their words, to follow a man called Jesus whom he otherwise did not know and discovered that as he, in his turn, preached Jesus to others, the Good News, that is, of his life, death and resurrection; the Good News, that is, of the coming closeness of the kingdom, so, like the seventy two disciples he found himself empowered to do good, to heal the sick and so on; empowered, not in the sense of remembering Christ as a distant mentor and merely recounting his deeds, but in the sense of discovering Christ to be even now his constant companion. This is the essence of discipleship and is only discovered in the moment, in the act of faith, in the encounter with who and what is not yet known; that creative moment where words and actions come which are as much a surprise to those who speak and do them as they are to others. The seventy two disciples return later then with great joy at not only what has changed others but has also changed themselves. They went out fearful, perhaps, of leaving their master behind but find he was with them all along and that their names are indeed already written in heaven. This is how we can be confident that Br. Herbert too is with us now in heaven or, in the words of a neighbour,

Thank you for being in and out of my life for the last forty years. A great companion I loved to talk to you about the notion of virtue ethics, and you as always smiled at the notion of the alleged founder, Socrates, who wrote down absolutely nothing.

So I wonder why I am writing anything now. I suppose I'm hoping you'll read it. Thank you Br. Herbert. See you soon. Simon.

Apart from a few scribbles in the sand I don't think we know of Jesus writing anything – but he certainly wrote words on our hearts, and, like Br. Herbert, continues to do so - the essence of discipleship.

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