

Restoring us to ourselves, God in Christ, restores us to community. And more than that one can enlarge this vision and see God in Christ restoring us, and all creation, to God, and indeed to that Christian vision of God as community - three persons in one. That's a huge statement with which to begin any homily and obviously needs unpacking, and more than that, grounding in the reality of our lives. Or to quote from WB Yeats

*" God guard me from those thoughts men think*

*In the mind alone;*

*He that sings a lasting song*

*Thinks in a marrow bone"*

To quote a quote from Donagh O'Shea again in his book ' Down to the Potter's House'.

What we are unpacking there is Jesus's continual need to fuel his hands-on ministry with time alone in prayer, and also what appears at first to be a desperate attempt to protect his reputation

*"Mind you say nothing to anyone, but go and show yourself to the priest and make the offering for your healing prescribed by Moses as evidence of your recovery."*

It's as if he's frightened of his own powers and of the enormity of the project he's begun. From the perspective of the gospel writers it's a plan he's fully aware of and is fully under his control but, reading between the lines, one wonders. If we ground Jesus in the reality of his own life as fully human he will have no more idea of where it's going next than we do. He's finding his way forward just as we have to, step by step, trying this or trying that, and seeing what happens, and adjusting any plan he might have accordingly, keenly aware that anything he says or does is open to misinterpretation. Words in this sense are the bane and the glory of our lives. We need them but what a treacherous tool they are. And when the leper starts telling everyone just what has happened to him – how could he not! this man once shunned and now free to mix again with everyone - Jesus realises that the game is up; people are coming to him whether he likes it or not, and he has to adapt his plan accordingly. There's a momentum taking place which is not of his own will. And isn't this true so often in our own lives? We might like to order them in this way or that but events, people, overtake us. This is the reality of our lives and then we need that larger vision, the thoughts men think in mind alone, to also sustain us, We can indeed lose ourselves in the particular, in doing the next most loving thing, even in leaving others to go back to the desert or the potters wheel, but only in order to regain the larger vision which will sustain us in our return to community. This is the momentum which will carry us all the way to death and through it. This is thinking on the move or in the marrow bone or, to return once more to Donagh O'Shea,

*" Here at the wheel is my best place for thinking. I am a little afraid of the thinking that is done at desks; it is all too likely to be spinning out of itself. The mind can detach itself with ease from the other faculties and senses and produce a cloth that is beautiful but unwearable"*

But words like these were no doubt written at a desk also, we can't escape them but we can put them in their place. So it's time to stand in the garden again and breathe, before the momentum of the day overtakes us. Thinking is thinking wherever it takes place, whether led into the desert by the Holy Spirit or led out of it by the Holy Spirit.

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