

Thought for the Day, Saturday 17th July 2021



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“From “A Life We Never Dared Hope For” - The final part of a Letter addressed to us

We conclude our readings from Brother Roger of Taizé. ¹ ²

“I know you want to fashion your life in communion with Christ, who is love, so I have written this letter for you. You will feel freer to move from one provisional stage to the next, if you rely throughout your life on a small number of essential values - a few simple truths.

We are ourselves only in God's presence

If you feel no sense of God's presence within you when you pray, why worry? There is no precise dividing-line between emptiness and fullness, any more than between doubt and faith, or fear and love.

The essential is always concealed from your own eyes. But that only makes you more eager than ever to progress towards the one reality. Then, gradually, it becomes possible to sense something of the depth and breadth of a love ³ beyond all comprehension. At that point you touch the gates of contemplation, and then you draw the energy you need for new beginnings, for daring commitments.

Discovering what kind of person you are, with nobody there to understand you, can provoke a sense of shame at being alive, strong enough to lead to self destruction. At times it makes you feel that you are living under sentence. But, for the Gospel, there is neither normal nor abnormal, only human beings, made in the image of God. Then who can condemn? Jesus prays in you. He offers the liberation of forgiveness to all who live in poverty of heart, so that they, in their turn, may become liberators of others.

In every single one of us there is a place of solitude no human relationship can fill, not even the deepest love between two individuals. Anyone who does not accept this solitude sooner or later revolts against other people, and against God himself.

And yet you are never alone. Let yourself be plumbed to the depths, ⁴ and you will realise that everyone is created for a presence. There, in your heart of hearts, in that place where no two people are alike, Christ is waiting for you. And there the unexpected happens.

In a flash, the love of God the Holy Spirit streaks through each one of us like lightning in our night. The risen Christ takes hold of you, and he takes over. He takes upon himself everything that is unbearable. It is only later, sometimes much later, that we realise: Christ came, he gave his overflowing life.

The moment your eyes are opened you will say, 'My heart was burning within me as he spoke.' ⁵

Christ does not destroy flesh and blood. In communion with him there is no room for alienation. He does not break what is in us. He has not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

When you listen, in the silence of your heart, he transfigures all that troubles you most. When you are shrouded in what you cannot understand, when darkness gathers, his love is a flame. You need only fix your gaze on that lamp burning in the darkness, till day begins to dawn and the sun rises in your heart."

Unhappy is the one who is unaware that the sun/son is always present, inside us. The darkness of doubting pain, despair and night will always, eventually, be dispelled by the shining Son who breaks out in resurrection laughter. No tomb can contain His hope and withhold our future.

"Happy are they who die for love

Never a pause, O Christ, in your persistent questioning: 'Who do you say that I am?' ⁶

You are the one who loves me into endless life.

You open up the way of risk. You go ahead of me along the way of holiness, where happy are they who die of love, where the ultimate response is martyrdom.

Day by day you transfigure the 'No' in me into 'Yes'.

You ask me, not for a few scraps, but for the whole of my existence.

You are the one who prays in me day and night. My stammerings are prayer: simply calling you by your name, Jesus, fills our communion to the full.

You are the one who, every morning, slips on my finger the ring of the prodigal son, the ring of festival.

So why have I wavered for so long? Have I 'exchanged the glory of God for something useless? Have I left the spring of living water to build myself cracked cisterns that hold nothing?' (Jeremiah 2)

You have been seeking me unwearingly. Why did I hesitate once again, asking for time to deal with my own affairs? Once I had set my hand to the plough, why did I look back? Without realising it, I was rendering myself unfit to follow you.

Yet, though I had never seen you, I loved you. You kept on saying: Live the little bit of the Gospel you have grasped. Proclaim my life. Light fire on the earth... you, follow me...

Until one day I understand; you were asking me commit myself to the point of no return."

And so we say,

'Amen Lord, rise within me, rise within us, shine out anew, in, on and through'.

Love and blessings, David





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¹ Brother Roger (1980) (trans. Chisholm E.) *A Life We Never Dared Hope For: Journal 1972-1974*. London & Oxford, UK. Mowbray: 74-77

² I have edited the original words of the translator, and hope this aids flow and application. The blue script is my comment

³ My dictating app mistyped this as 'laugh' but... good laughter is an aspect of love, isn't it?

⁴ Psalm 139:23-24. Brother Roger's thought is steeped in scripture which he stirs, distils, and dispenses. His gives us elixirs that enhance our spiritual senses with rich allusions and uplifting references. Identifying the sources can be an interesting intellectual exercise - but I dare to suggest it is best to let these words of life settle, for they speak to our depths - and in our depths, sediment is stirred and the nutrition of wholeness and holiness can be, and is, ingested.

⁵ Luke 24:32

⁶ Matthew 16:15