

28 DAYS WITH *St. Brendan's in the City*

IF WE LONG TO LIVE FAITHFULLY TO GOD IN THE MIDST OF THE REALITIES OF THE WORLD THAT WE KNOW EXIST, THE VOICES IN THESE READINGS ENCOURAGE US TO DO SO. THEY SPEAK TO SOMETHING DEEP IN OUR SOUL, AND CALL FORTH FROM US GREATNESS. THEY CALL US TO BE WILLING TO DIE FOR SOMETHING, AND EVEN MORE SO TO LIVE FOR SOMETHING.

ASSAILED BY A WORLD THAT WOULD MAKE US CONTENT WITH A SMALL LIFE LIVED IN THE PURSUIT OF SELF, WE NEED THEIR COMPANY TO KEEP US IN THEIR COMPANY.

SOME OF THE WORDS THAT FOLLOW COME FROM PEOPLE LESSER KNOWN, BUT THEIR WORDS TOUCH ON SOME GREAT INSIGHT WHICH LOOMS LARGER THAN THE PERSON WHO WROTE IT. SOME OF THE WORDS THAT FOLLOW COME FROM PEOPLE KNOWN TO CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AND FEW OTHERS. SOME OF THE FOLLOWING QUOTATIONS ARE INCLUDED NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF WHAT IS SAID, BUT ALSO AS A REMINDER OF THE PERSON WHO SAID IT. AND IN SOME CASES, THE WORDS ARE THE DEEPEST MESSAGES OF MEN AND WOMEN

WHO ARE KNOWN AROUND THE WORLD, FOR THEY HAVE CHANGED IT.

REGARDLESS, THESE WORDS AND WITNESSES ARE NOT COMPILED ONLY TO INSPIRE US, BUT TO HELP US LIVE DIFFERENTLY, TO LIVE DEEPLY INTO AND OUT OF THE TRUTHS AND CONVICTIONS THAT WE TOO HAVE BEEN GRACIOUSLY GIVEN.

WHETHER READ STRAIGHT THROUGH OR READING ONE SELECTION A DAY WITH REFLECTION, THESE REFLECTIONS REMIND US THAT EVERY DAY THAT WE ARE PRESENTED WITH A DECISION TO 'CHOOSE THIS DAY WHOM YOU WOULD SERVE' (JOSH. 24.15), WE NEED TO BE GIVEN THE STRENGTH TO CHOOSE WELL, AND THAT IT IS GOOD PRACTICE KEEP COMPANY WITH THE GREAT ONES WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE US OR WHOSE LIVES TODAY ARE LEADING US. WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO PRINT THIS COLLECTION OUT, FEED ON THE WISDOM AND FIND COURAGE FROM THESE INSIGHTS, AND TASTE THROUGH THE PAGE A LITTLE OF THE LIFE THAT WE AT ST. BRENDAN'S IN THE CITY ARE LONGING TO LIVE.

The more we find out about Jesus, and particularly about his death and resurrection, the more we are then energized by the Spirit to reveal God's love to the world. In John 20 Jesus breathes on the disciples and says to them, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit." And suddenly we see the whole vista of what God did in Jesus, through his healing and his suffering, through his parables, his celebrations, and ultimately his agony. And, with that, we discover that the story of Jesus' ministry is not only the story of what he did in history, but encompasses also the vocation that comes to us in the present: that we should be, in the power of the Spirit, the presence of Jesus for the whole world. This discovery brings the most remarkable joy and the most remarkable sorrow. This is our vocation: to take up our cross, and be Jesus for the whole world, living with the joy and the sorrow woven into the pattern of our days.

NT WRIGHT, *REFLECTING THE GLORY*

Following Christ is not some vague, abstract idea, some lofty philosophical concept. It means living like Jesus. If the New Testament is true, then Jesus longs for us to love our neighbors the way he did—daily, persistently, practically. Jesus modeled servanthood, self-sacrifice, and special concern for the poor and neglected. And he also cared for people’s spiritual needs.

RON SIDER, *LIVING LIKE JESUS*

We must be contemplatives in the heart of the world.

MOTHER TERESA

[After being called extremist...] As I continued to think about the matter I gradually gained a bit of satisfaction from being considered an extremist. Was not Jesus an extremist in love—“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you.” Was not Amos an extremist for justice—“Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.” Was not Paul an extremist for the gospel of Jesus Christ—“I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” Was not Martin Luther an extremist—“Here I stand; I can do no other so help me God.” Was not John Bunyan an extremist—“I will stay in jail to the end of my days before I make a butchery of my conscience.” Was not Abraham Lincoln an extremist—“This nation cannot survive half slave and half free.” Was not Thomas Jefferson an extremist—“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.” So the question is not whether or we will be extremist, but what kind of extremist will we be?... Jesus Christ was an extremist for love, truth, and goodness.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.,

LETTER FROM A BIRMINGHAM CITY JAIL

God Almighty has set before me two great objects—the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of morals.

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE

OCTOBER 28, 1787

For most of my life I have struggled to find God, to know God, to love God. I have tried hard to follow the guidelines of the spiritual life—pray always, work for others, read the Scriptures—and to avoid the many temptations to dissipate myself. I have failed many times but always tried again, even when I was close to despair. Now I wonder whether I have sufficiently realized that during all this time God has been trying to find me, to know me, and to love me. The question is not “How am I to find God?” but “How am I to let

myself be found by him?" The question is not "How am I to know God?" but "How am I to let myself be known by God?" And, finally, question is not "How am I to love God?" but "How am I to let myself be loved by God?" God is looking into the distance for me, trying to find me, and longing to bring me home. In all three parables which Jesus tells in response to the question of why he eats with sinners, he puts the emphasis on God's initiative. God is the shepherd who goes looking for his lost sheep. God is the woman who lights a lamp, sweeps out the house, and searches everywhere for her lost coin until she has found it. God is the father who watches and waits for his children, runs out to meet them, embraces them, pleads with them, begs and urges them to come home.

HENRI NOUWEN

THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

MARGARET MEAD

Our major weapon in this [struggle for social justice] is Christian community. Now, when I speak of "Christian Community", I am referring not just to the work of churches, and certainly not churches as they are often manifest today. I am speaking of an alternative way of living that shows forth social life as it is meant to be lived. Communities of love and acceptance. Fellowships of freedom and liberation. Centers of hope and vision. Societies of nurture and accountability. Little pockets of life so stunning that a watching world will declare, "See how they love one another!"

RICHARD FOSTER

STREAMS OF LIVING WATER

The most helpful experiments are accomplished by people who are too naïve to
A baseball player who expects to excel in the game without adequate exercise of his body is no more ridiculous than the Christian who hopes to be able to act in the manner of Christ when put to the test without the appropriate exercise of godly living...the secret of the easy yoke involves living as Jesus did in the entirety of his life—adopting his overall lifestyle. Following 'in his steps' cannot be equated with behaving as he did 'on the spot'. To live as Christ lived is to live as he did *all* his life...The secret of the easy yoke, then, is to learn from Christ how to live our total lives, how to invest all our time and energies of mind and body as he did.

DALLAS WILLARD

THE SPIRIT OF THE DISCIPLINES

It's absolutely clear what's on God's mind. You just have to read Scripture.

BONO

My life is my message.

MAHATMA GANDHI

If we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Bible, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition (and money and comfort and power and status) when infinite joy is offered to us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud-pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by an offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.

CS LEWIS

THE WEIGHT OF GLORY

We cannot love God unless we love each other, and to love each other we must know each other. We know him in the breaking of bread, and we know each other in the breaking of bread, and we are not alone any more. Heaven is a banquet and life is a banquet, too, even with a crust, where there is companionship. We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community.

DOROTHY DAY

THE LONG LONELINESS

You are so young, so before all beginning, and I want to beg you, as much as I can, to be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and to try and love the *questions themselves* like locked rooms and like books that are written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. *Live* the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer.

RAINER MARIA RILKE

LETTERS TO A YOUNG POET

Only a demanding, common task builds community.

GEORGE MACLEOD

IONA COMMUNITY

When you're lovers in a dangerous time / sometimes you're made to feel as if your love's a crime / but nothing worth having comes without some kind of fight / got to kick at the darkness til it bleeds daylight

BRUCE COCKBURN

LOVERS IN A DANGEROUS TIME

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.

ST. FRANCIS

The fruit of silence is faith.
The fruit of faith is prayer.
The fruit of prayer is love.
The fruit of love is service.
The fruit of service is silence.

MOTHER TERESA

The great Christian revolutions come not by the discovery of something that was not known before. They happen when someone takes radically something that was always there.

H. RICHARD NIEBUHR

Sometimes I ride a bucking faith while one hand grips and the other flails the air, and like any daredevil I gouge with my heels for blood, for a wilder ride, for more.

ANNIE DILLARD

PILGRIM AT TINKER CREEK

The chief motivation for the Missionaries of Charity, Mother Teresa would often say, was not to do social work, but to adore Christ in the littlest and weakest of his children, and to bring Christ the souls for which he thirsts.

CAROL ZALESKI

THE DARK NIGHT OF MOTHER TERESA

We are called, prayerfully, to discern where in our discipline the human project is showing signs of exile and humbly and boldly to act symbolically in ways that declare that the powers have been defeated, the kingdom has come in Jesus the Jewish Messiah, and that the new

way of being human has been unveiled, and to be prepared to tell the story that explains what these symbols are all about...in symbol and in praxis, in story and articulate answers to questions.

NT WRIGHT

THE CHALLENGE OF JESUS

Jesus focused his ministry on the cities and was well acquainted with the problems and oppression faced by those who lived in urban areas...We are called to be sent and set apart for God's ministry in the cities, but holiness is more than preaching the message. It is embracing a lifestyle that is lived out among the people God cares about."

DR. CHERYL SANDERS

It will not be enough for Christians to form a culture that runs counter to the values of the broader culture. Christians should be a community radically committed to the city as a whole. We must move out sacrificially to serve the good of the whole human community, especially the poor. Revelation 21-22 makes it clear that the ultimate purpose of redemption is not to escape the material world, but to renew it. God's purpose is not only saving individuals, but also inaugurating a new world based on justice, peace, and love, not power, strife, and selfishness. So Christians work for the peace, security, justice and prosperity of their city and their neighbors, loving them in word and deed, whether they believe what we do or not.

TIM KELLER

A NEW KIND OF URBAN CHRISTIAN

Unlike ordinary food, however, the body of Christ does not become assimilated into our bodies, but vice versa. Thus Augustine reports in his Confessions that he heard a voice from on high say to him, "I am the food of the fully grown; grow and you will feed on me. And you will not change me into you like the food your flesh eats, but you will be changed into me." The fact that the church is literally changed by the Holy Spirit into Christ is not a cause for triumphalism, however, precisely because our assimilation to the body of Christ means that we then become food for the world, to be broken, given away, and consumed. The church is called, as Romero said, to be the very body of Christ in history.¹² The church does so, not by conquering bodies, but by making a sacrifice of its own body. In this sense, the church is called, as Paul says, to make up "what is lacking in Christ's afflictions" (Col 1:24). The church is the incarnation of the presence of Christ in the world, but the church is only properly the church when it exists as sustenance for others.

The church only receives its life as a gift of the Holy Spirit, and it is in turn given away. The eucharist does not simply look backward in time to remember Christ's death and resurrection, but it also looks forward to the full coming of the kingdom. The eucharist is both a remembrance of the past and a foretaste of the future.

WILLIAM KAVANAUGH

It helps, now and then, to step back and take the long view. The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is beyond our vision. We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us. No statement says all that could be said. No prayer ever fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection. No pastoral visit brings wholeness. No program accomplishes the church's mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything. This is what we are about: We plant seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects beyond our capabilities. We cannot do everything and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for God's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the results, but that is the difference between a master builder and the the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own.

OSCAR ROMERO

In spite of the prevailing tendency to conform, we as Christians have a mandate to be nonconformists. The Apostle Paul, who knew the inner realities of the Christian faith, counseled, "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." We are called to be people of conviction, not conformity; of moral nobility, not social respectability. We are commanded to live differently and according to a higher loyalty....

We need to recapture the gospel glow of the early Christians, who were nonconformists in the truest sense of the word and refused to shape their witness according to the mundane patterns of the world. Willingly they sacrificed fame, fortune, and life itself in behalf of a cause they knew to be right. Quantitatively small, they were qualitatively giants. Their powerful gospel put an end to such barbaric evils as infanticide and bloody gladiatorial contests. Finally, they captured the Roman Empire for Jesus Christ....

Honesty impels me to admit that transformed nonconformity, which is always costly and never altogether comfortable, may mean walking through the valley of the

shadow of suffering, losing a job, or having a six-year-old daughter ask, “Daddy, why do you have go to jail so much?” But we are gravely mistaken to think that Christianity protects us from the pain and agony of mortal existence. Christianity has always insisted that the cross we bear precedes the crown we wear.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

TRANSFORMED NONCONFORMIST

STRENGTH TO LOVE

And even though the victory over sin and death achieved by Christ on the Cross and in the Resurrection does not abolish suffering from human life - it nevertheless throws a new light upon every suffering. That light is the light of salvation. In his Messianic activity, Christ drew increasingly close to the world of human suffering. His actions concerned primarily those who were suffering and seeking help. He healed the sick, consoled the afflicted, fed the hungry, freed people from deafness, from blindness, from leprosy, from the devil and from various physical disabilities. Three times he restored the dead to life. He was sensitive to every human suffering. Christ goes to his Passion and death with full awareness of the mission that he has to fulfill: by means of his own suffering, he must bring it about "that man should not perish, but have eternal life".....In the Cross of Christ, not only is the Redemption accomplished through suffering - human suffering itself has been redeemed. Each human being is called to share in that suffering through which all human suffering has been redeemed. In bringing about the redemption through suffering, Christ has also raised human suffering to the level of the Redemption. Each man, in his suffering, can become a sharer in the redemptive suffering of Christ. And those who share in the sufferings of Christ are also called to share in the glory of Christ's Resurrection.”

POPE JOHN PAUL THE GREAT

SALVIFICI DOLORIS

