

Saturday Lent, Week 3



It is hard to do anything that exposes you to the attention of others without worrying about the impression you are making. If this worry becomes too strong it overshadows the way you work and you may eventually do everything for effect – to gain the attention that your ego craves. A gulf of falseness begins to open between what you are doing and why you are doing it.

The joy of work diminishes as your attachment to results increases.

Because we live in institutions so much driven by the competitive impulse this attitude to work can become a habit that infects every kind of activity. Even things we do alone which no one is interested in or knows about can seem to be monitored by a mental camera sending constant feedback on how we are comparing with an imaginary rival. In extreme cases this leads to mental collapse because it becomes so hard to distinguish the real from the illusory. In most cases it leads to a constant state of self-dissatisfaction and anxiety. In biblical language this is what feeling ‘unrighteousness’ means, as if we were (or could be) separated from the divine goodness, and occupy an isolated slot in a hostile universe.

To reverse this requires a new kind of work performed at a deep level of solitude where we recognize and accept our total uniqueness. In this desert of interiority we awaken to our interconnectedness. Solitude blooms. The wound in consciousness begins to heal. No part of us can then be isolated from love.

The work involved in restoring a healthy balance in mind and heart is the work we do in meditation. Eventually, when we discover that we have truly started the journey the peace of simply being on the way arises. Hopefully Lent so far has helped us to start feeling this, day by day.

The times of meditation are deliciously free of all competition. There is no audience to applaud or boo us. But nor are we alone.

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