

May 7, 2017 "Day By Day"

First Reading ~ Acts 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, friendship, and communal living, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Everyone felt a sense of awe because many signs and wonders happened through the apostles. There was an intense sense of togetherness among all who believed; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, they met together in the temple, and they broke bread in their homes, and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all people. And day by day God added to the community those who were experiencing liberation.

Second Reading

~ adapted from Barbara Brown Taylor in An Altar in the World

As often as I think I am seeking other people out in order to get something for myself, the deeper truth is that I am hoping they will draw me out of myself. If you have ever gotten into a conversation so compelling that you could not believe what your watch said when you looked at it, then you know what I mean.

Artists and athletes speak of something called "flow". When they are deeply involved in what they are doing, time ceases to exist. So does their sense of themselves as separate from what they are doing. In the case of the artists, they become one with the paint, the chalk, the clay, the instrument, the music. In the case of the athletes, they become one with the team, the ball, the court. The body moves by instinct instead of thought. Awareness blooms, as the individual self escapes its confines to become a part of something bigger than the self.

In the Christian mystical tradition, one name for this phenomenon is Divine Union. It can happen all alone with God, but it can also happen with other people, and sometimes even with trees. It is not achieved as much as it is given - the often fleeting but fully memorable gift of escaping the small self long enough to glimpse a wholeness more real than the most real brokenness. In the light of this wholeness, it can become impossible to make meaningful distinctions between God and other people, trees, or anything else in creation. Everything that exists, exists in this wholeness. Everything that lives, lives in this light. This is the one community that matters, the one toward which all others reach.

The teachings of [ancient followers] includes the wisdom that the hardest spiritual work in the world is to love the neighbor as the self- to encounter another human being not as someone you can use, change, fix, help, save, enroll, convince or control, but simply as someone who can spring you from the prison of yourself. If you will allow it. This can be as frightening as it is liberating. It may be the only real spiritual discipline there is.