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First Sunday of Lent



Life presents different faces of reality to us in an always unpredictable sequence. Getting on a bus or deciding to move to a new apartment may be trivial events of forgettable meaning, or they may become milestones of our life because of the consequences they bring.

The random and unconscious element of life is beyond our control. If we personify this randomness – or even karma - as God or the devil, because the consequences seem to us at the moment to be good or bad, we may enjoy the short-lived relief of an instant explanation for what is happening. But we miss the meaning and therefore the whole truth which sets us free from illusion.

Jesus was led into the desert for forty days and tempted – tested – by what are clearly powerful advances of the ego. Self-sufficiency, pride and power are seductive voices at any time but especially when we are in the desert. This is a place of exposure and vulnerability where our familiar ego-identities are suspended and we face the raw, undisguised egoism of survival and self-promotion. Naked ego, even our own egotism, is repellent to the conscious mind. So we disguise it, deny it or refuse to accept responsibility for it by demonizing it as a force outside us.

According to the gospel stories Jesus unflinchingly faced his own ego, saw through it and recognized its voices as illusory. Once we have seen through our self-generated illusion we are liberated. Even if they return to test us again we are stronger in identifying and withstanding them. Each test makes us more real. After the testing we can relax for a while and through the natural and ordinary circumstances of our lives we feel a power touching us that renews and consoles.

“Then the devil left him, and angels appeared and looked after him.”

Prayer, the third great praxis of the Christian life, is a desert. Its work is about facing our illusions and becoming real.

Laurence Freeman OSB

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