

# Along the track

## New Life

Victor Frankl, was an Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist as well as a Holocaust survivor, in fact he survived the degradation and abject misery of three concentration camps. At a later stage in his extraordinarily fruitful life, Frankl wrote 'One very important aspect of life after such an experience is that everything gets precious, gets piercingly important. You get stabbed by things, by flowers and by babies and by beautiful things - just the very act of living, of walking and breathing and eating and having friends and chatting. Everything seems to look more beautiful...'

It is easy to take things for granted, to let life go by unappreciated. We are all pretty busy, lots to do, lots to worry about. Easter is the annual reminder not to take things for granted, to stop and think. It is not just ANOTHER Easter, it is a reminder of the continuing gift of new life. It is the annual reminder that this gift is meant to revitalise us, our attitudes, our beliefs, our ways of acting, and thus revitalise our relationships, our families, our communities, our organisations. This new life is for the here and now, not something for the afterlife!

In one of Jesus' references to his being the Good Shepherd, he says:

*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life, and have it in all its fullness.* Jn 10:10

In our time, the thief that comes to kill and destroy this new life is busy-ness, frantic activity on the one hand and on the other complacency, indifference, just drifting along not making genuine commitments.

When Jesus appeared to his disciples after the Resurrection, *He breathed on them and said: Receive the Holy Spirit* (John 20:22). Why did Jesus breathe on them? Breath is the sign of life – receive my Spirit within you. We have not only received the life of this Spirit at Baptism, we have also received the gifts of this Spirit. These gifts of the Spirit are meant to make this new life come alive in our attitudes, values, actions, interactions, commitments. We have received 'the gifts of the Holy Spirit' not so we might become supernatural but so that we might become better human beings and so that when we put these gifts into action, the world we live in might become a better place. These gifts of the Spirit within us are like seeds, sparks. Easter reminds us of our need to fan them into life.

So how do you feel with the Spirit at work within – does it make a difference? St Paul wrote about the signs of the gifts of the Spirit being present (Galatians, 5). The gifts of the Spirit are present when we see love,

commitment, perseverance, curiosity, generosity, faithfulness, joy, patience, kindness, gentleness, peace, goodness, understanding, courage, wonder and awe. In other words, when there is an outwardness, a generosity of spirit, a respect for others.

St Paul also wrote very forcefully about the gifts of the Spirit being absent. If we are not led by the Spirit, we begin looking inwards, we become the centre of importance – it's all about me. People and things are here for our use. When the spirit is not present bickering, dissent and rivalries are common, we become envious, jealous of others, judgemental, hostile. We can see excesses in their many forms – a reluctance to make genuine commitments, the abuse of power, exploitation of others, and outbursts of rage and temper, putting down others, gossiping, an inability to listen to others or show empathy or understanding.

Without the Spirit we put ourselves at the centre of everything and everyone and everything is at our disposal – we don't seem to be able to moderate our behaviour. There is little respect for the gifts associated with our gender, so we see sexual harassment as acceptable; there are excesses in our lives like drunkenness, the misuse of drugs, theft, even violence.

In the creed we acknowledge that we believe in God who created *all that is seen and unseen*. Just consider for a moment how much of creation is invisible. Love and compassion, creativity, human ingenuity, generosity, awe and wonder, curiosity, zeal, respect, optimism, loyalty also belong to this world created by the Spirit. They are an integral part of us, the very things that make us human. When we show love and compassion, when we are generous, curious, when we are filled with awe and wonder when we look beyond the physical creation to see and experience this deeper level of life, when we open hearts, our own and others, to experience this goodness and beauty of the God who lies deep within each of us, these are the gifts of the Spirit which make us better people, more fulfilled, more human.

Each day the Spirit invites us to a new beginning. It is the Spirit at work within who calls us to be more than we thought we could be, who calls us to love, to be generous, to be curious, to be faithful and compassionate, who inspires and helps us bring these gifts to life. As Victor Frankl discovered. 'Then everything seems more beautiful...'

Regards  
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