

PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY FOR COMMUNITY

Spirituality of the Roster, Chaos & Disillusionment

Spirituality of the Roster

(2 Timothy 4:9-22)

Do your best to come to me soon, Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful in my ministry. I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus. 'When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will pay him back for his deeds. You also must beware of him, for he strongly opposed our message.

At my first defence no one came to my support, but all deserted me. May it not be counted against them! 17But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and save me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus remained in Corinth; Trophimus I left ill in Miletus. Do your best to come before winter. Eubulus sends greetings to you, as do Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brothers and sisters.

The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.)

- **one is struck by the stark polarisation in last week's reading 2 Timothy 4:9-22**
- **there are not enough shades of grey**
- **too easy to portray this as dysfunctional humour deficiency**
- **there is a positive spirituality in being this focused**
- **Illustration: Where were you when Paul Keating attributed his election victory to the *True Believers***
- **Paul's reflects a totality in his allegiances – if you are not totally for Jesus then you are not for me**

- a sense that being Christian and hanging out with Christians is not only sufficient but the abundant basis for life
- it is the true believer – it means that the pivot of your week is your Christian life
- you willingly give your money because you believe what you are involved in is a not only a worthy cause but the most important cause
- **Illustration: Early days in Port Melbourne arriving a non-stipendiary capacity**
- those moments in your Christian life when you buy the whole package – when you are prepared to put in and more
- when your Christian life brings great fulfilment
- **Illustration: Philippians 3:7-9**

⁷ Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. ⁸More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith.

1. What are the things you value?
2. What would you give them up for?
3. What is it about Jesus Christ that evokes such total commitment (other than dysfunctionality!)?

Chaos

- **Illustration: Playing at home and away**

Top scorer but none for our team during the year we finished on the bottom scoring only 10 goals. Noticed the difference playing at and away from home in terms of support and battling the odds.

- **chaos is when niceness wears off in a Christian community's life**
 - you notice that some are more serious than others
 - some put in more than others
 - some enjoy more friends than others

- some are more valued than other
- some enjoy the social benefits than focusing on the spiritual
- and people start admitting that it is all too much to bear
- initially our response is try harder to overcome the chaos
- to push ourselves and each other harder
- **Illustration: Philippians 3:20-4:1**

²¹He will transform the body of our humiliation so that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.

⁴ ¹Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.
- however, one almost intuitively retreats from others to protect ourselves from further disillusionment
- two-edged sword – when you invest that much you are bound to be disappointed
- **Quote: You cannot be disillusioned if you do not have illusions.**
- what happens when church community struggles to match the rhetoric
- this disappointment can fuel a desire to do better – to rise above our foibles

Spirituality of Disillusionment

- **Illustration: The passing of the wedding aisle**

In 1990 when we came to Port Melbourne, one thing I found annoying was the passing sentimental traffic of blow-in weddings. It was not without some iconoclastic emotion when we rearranged the 400-seating capacity of the Holy Trinity Church building pews into a single file removing the aisle. It became a guilty pleasure when a girl visiting the following service to check out our aisle, burst into tears because her dream wedding of a long bridal march had been shattered.

- **Illustration: Weddings at Port Melbourne**

There was more to come. I remember it was the summer of 1992 and the telephone woke me at 7.30 am. We had found that we were still getting wedding requests from all over Melbourne, so I arranged a fee schedule to cover the costs involved of our time – perhaps to weed out those who were slightly sentimental. Anyone requesting a wedding received a schedule of the costs involved – about \$600 – and was invited to attend a service. On the telephone was mother of a would-be bride who had received our

wedding information. The mother was outraged that we would charge – clearly it was our privilege to marry her daughter. I told her it was a common practice – though admittedly we did not quite have a common or even rank church building. Needless to say, she chewed my ear and then hung up when I failed to see the matter from her point of view. The scene was 7.30 am a couple days later when the telephone woke me again. This time it was my bishop, who in his understated manner told me he did not like his local priests motivating people to complain to him.

- **the spirituality of disillusionment is the spirituality of feeling ripped off**
 - **it can be in decisive moment or a many fleeting moments**
 - **the spirituality of disillusionment is when you stop feeling connected to the heart of your Christian faith**
 - **spirituality of disillusionment can relate to many aspects of life – work, relationship, friendship, church, God**
 - **it can happen through various experiences**
 - **some Christian lets you down**
 - **God goes on holidays when needed most**
 - **the minister offends you**
 - **the church deals with you officiously**
 - **you are made to feel judged and unworthy of the church**
 - **something new happens to fill the void once filled by Christian life**
1. When was the last time you experienced the Christian community living up to its rhetoric?
 2. When was the last time you experienced the disappointment of the Christian community not living up to its rhetoric?
 3. What helps you bridge disappointment and renewed commitment?