

## Gingins, Holy Communion

Sun 4<sup>th</sup> May 2025, 16h

Acts 9:1-6 The Conversion of Saul

John 21:1-19 Jesus Appears to the Disciples,  
including Peter

### Falling down, getting up, dreaming, walking ...

- Sometimes, Bible passage is a real gift - heard it from me before (advantage of preaching only occasionally for the last 15 years) - first female disciple - called Annette - did you know ?
- other disciples, even Jesus, not very nice to her (Jesus: 'throw Annette over the other side of the boat ... so disciples did as he told them and threw Annette into the water on other side of the boat') - Monty Pythonesque - 'I thought he said Annette' - 'no, A NET !' 😊
- Imagine the theological disputes that could have emerged Could have led to years of schism between women-only Annettist movement and the anti-Annetists, who would spend centuries throwing each other into lakes.
- Thankfully biblical scholarship would come along to explain that the original Greek meant no such thing ... 😊

... but I digress !

- The real gift in the Bible passages - a word for selves in all our daily challenges - word for World in all the turbulence it is going through
- And the most serendipitous thing is that Gospel focuses on Peter - appropriate following death of Pope Francis - throne of St Peter, but very much not someone to put himself on a throne - this was Gospel reading at Pope's funeral
- Pope Francis - notable above all for his humanity - something see in original Peter - gives us chance to think of Pope Francis and his word for the World
- I came across, and love, a clip of Pope Francis - Instagram - in it he urges crowd of young people 'keep dreaming' - (Spanish - so all the more passionate and convincing 😊) - 'maybe not going to happen, but seek horizons, dream dreams !' may not get there, but 'even if life leaves you half way, by dreaming you will have got a lot further'

- There's a word here for all of us - for Peter - for ourselves - whenever our experience is that we fall down, and don't know which way is up, which way to go - we may fall down, but 'get up, keep dreaming, walk on ...'
- This is how we find Peter - he has fallen down - denied Jesus, despite his declaration to follow him through thick and thin - he has fallen down - Jesus's message is 'you may fall down, but get up, keep dreaming, walk on ...'
- And despite what you may feel about the state of the world, despite all appearances to the contrary, God is at work, renewing, transforming, healing - Holy Spirit is working his/her purposes out as year proceeds to year
- Here is a word for us, the flawed uncertain saints, real human beings, in the flesh - called but hesitant
- Can contrast, if you will, with Saul/Paul - clarity and certainty of his call - refer to text - vision of Jesus/God - I kind of envy him ? He has a sort of relentless conviction which is ... well ... frankly, a bit annoying - a kind of perfect saint in his conviction and his zeal ...
- [except he isn't of course - elsewhere he reveals his struggles, his thorn in the flesh ... a

reminder that with all those people to whom we ascribe a certain persona, they are all human, vulnerable] ... but still, a bit perfect, a bit too keen, one might say 😊

- Perfect conversion - Saul - proper conversion - visions, voice from on high - reminds me a bit of scene from The Blues Brothers (Jake and Elwood revival meeting, somersaulting up the aisle - (I'm thinking maybe [John Tracey, other ...] might like to demonstrate that now - no ? - revelation, do you see the light?" - "I see the light!") ...
- ... contrast, on the other hand, Peter - flawed, hesitant - clawing his way back to conviction - famously denied Jesus - now in this passage [refer to text - 'do you love me ?' - 'feed my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my sheep'] - three times, echo of denial (3x)
- ... falls down, gets up, falls down, gets up - words I have included in lines from a poem (have copies to read later) based on another real human being, in the flesh, Mary Magdalene - he falls down, and gets up, he has longed and has touched, and has felt, hurt and healed ... flawed saint - has had his call, but life has also knocked the stuffing out of him - still we see him here, getting up from falling down, being told : 'keep dreaming, walk on ...' - God

is at work, transforming, renewing ... and will do so in you and through you, and sometimes despite you, - but, yes, WITH you ...

- A word for each of us - you may or may not be going through some uncertain times - lot of it about, in my own circles friends and family with terminal illnesses, losing jobs, turbulent times
- A word for the world in turbulent times - I have tried to capture some of the confusion in the other poem you have (read later) - where decency (maybe it was just an illusion ?) seems to have given way to a brazen disregard for Truth, a cynically post-truth society :
  - ... *Scorn shouts down the hopeful,  
Dismantles trust,  
And arm-wrestles its wearying way with  
The bluster of the bullies,  
The survival of the richest,  
Juggling brute power,  
Amusing themselves,  
Turning Truth into their  
Plaything.*
- There's a sort of wistful longing for a different way of doing things in the poem - but let's not be naïve - the world always has been a contested place, realpolitik a reality, with power and privilege and self-interest something

to be recognised and somehow navigated - and to be faced with courage and conviction and boldness

- But the pace of the assault has been relentless lately, and it has been easy to feel lost, beaten up, anxious
- I recognise it in myself - having spent my career working for international solidarity, justice, hope - a sudden feeling of not knowing how to move forward, what is the next step to take
- Message of Pope Francis is all the more relevant - 'keep dreaming' - 'seek horizons, dream dreams !' may not get there, but 'even if life leaves you half way, by dreaming you will have got a lot further' - you may feel that you have fallen down, the world has fallen down - is falling down - but : keep dreaming, put on your walking shoes, walk on ...
- 'Where should I walk ?' you say !
- Cf Jesus with Peter - one step after another : 'do you love me ? ... feed my sheep' (*again, repeat ... again, repeat*) ... i.e. hold onto the dream Peter, then do the next thing that you have to do - don't project yourself into a future role, do what is in front of you

- - if in doubt about where going, do the next thing you have to do, and then the next ... one step at a time, along that way which Pope Francis spoke about
- I have found that in walking (Camino) - sometimes when you are uncertain where you are going, just put one foot in front of the other, again, and again, and again ... and you will face honestly your frailty, vulnerability uncertainty, fear ... fall down, and get up, fall down, and get up ... and maybe life will catch up with you halfway and you won't get where you had hoped, but at least you will have got a lot further than you ever believed might be possible - dream, hope, walk, and walking you will find the way...
- Hope is always there - where there was no hope, suddenly there is Hope
- despite all appearances to the contrary, God is at work, renewing, transforming, healing - Holy Spirit is working his/her purposes out as year proceeds to year
- in your own life, whatever the turbulence and uncertainty, all will be well
- In this turbulent World, held in the palm of God's hand ... 'all is well, and all will be well,

and all manner of things shall be well'

- Amen