

Our Weakness and God's Power
Morning Prayer – Saturday, November 29, 2014
Ignatian Spirituality Conference, Hong Kong

Good morning everyone. Today Fr. Jose Garcia, SJ will speak to us about the history of Ignatian spirituality. As we listen to the stories of individuals as well as groups, we will hear about great successes and strengths. We will also hear about failure and human weakness. Accordingly, this morning perhaps we can pray with one aspect of this...

I invite you to find a comfortable position...to take a couple of slow deep breaths...
(Pause)

I invite you now to pray this preparatory prayer together with me:

O Lord, we acknowledge that we are in your presence. We offer this time to you. Lead our hearts and minds. May everything we feel, think and do be directed purely toward your greater praise and service. Amen.

Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given to me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.' So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong. - 2 Cor. 12:7-10

Does this make sense? It does not seem logical or reasonable. How is that God's power is perfected in our weakness? From school through to the working world, society often encourages us to put our best foot forward. We should not have any weaknesses. We should display that we are in control. Vulnerabilities and weakness are things to be hidden.

The Kingdom of God, however, is not like this. God chooses another way. God chooses the weak to reveal God's glory. This is evident throughout Scripture, whether it is David defeating Goliath, Jesus declaring that the last shall be first, Mary Magdalene (who had seven demons) becoming a disciple and then the first to proclaim Jesus' resurrection, or ultimately, Jesus' bringing us salvation through torture and a wooden cross.

God chooses what is weak to reveal God's glory.

The Jesuit, Michael Buckley once asked seminarians, "Are you weak enough to be a priest?" We could similarly ask, "Are you weak enough to be a Christian?" 'Weakness here does not mean choosing to sin, choosing to do what is wrong or choosing what is unhealthy.

A weakness is an inability to guarantee success, to secure our future or to protect ourselves from suffering. A weakness makes us feel inadequate or vulnerable in this life.

A weakness is something that reminds me I am a human creature in need of my Creator.

Have I ever felt weak in my life?

What is one weakness that I notice is present in my life? Can I name it?

- It may be something I try to hide from others
- It may be difficult to admit to myself

- Something that makes me feel inadequate or vulnerable
 - Something that I struggle with, that drains my time, my energy or my spirit
- What is one weakness that I have?

(Pause)

Amazingly, God can use our weaknesses and inadequacies.

But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. - 2 Cor. 4:7-10

We may want to cover up our weaknesses. Yet, God is saying, we do not need to be afraid. Weaknesses can be transformed. Weakness in God's hands can manifest God's life because Christ is present in our weakness.

The Icon of the Trinity by Andrei Rublev (approx. 1410)

This icon has many symbols and creative aspects. Today I would just like to bring one to your attention. This icon is written in such a way that when you gaze at it, when you look upon it, you become the fourth person at the table. The space in the centre is for you.

If you choose, you can sit in this fourth spot and just be with the Trinity now.

(Pause)

As you sit with the Trinity now, is there anything you would like to say to the Trinity (or any one of them) about a weakness you have and how it affects your life? ...They are listening...

(Pause)

Do the Father, the Son or the Spirit have anything to say to me?

(Pause)

If you choose, you can surrender this weakness to the Trinity...place it in on Their table...place it at Their disposal... place it in Their hands...

(Pause)

If you choose, you can ask the Trinity to let their power bring about something good from this inadequacy.

If I wish, in your heart, you can now ask the Trinity to take your weakness...and in your weakness to perfect Their power.

(Pause)

Is there anything else you would like to say to the Trinity this morning?

(Pause)

For a moment now, I invite you to do nothing....just sit there with them and let the Trinity love you.
(Pause)

When you are ready, we come back together as we slowly bring the prayer to a close....Together we say:

Suscipe
Take, Lord and receive
all my liberty, my memory,
my understanding, and my entire will.
All I have and call my own.
You have given all to me.
To you, Lord, I return it.
Everything is yours;
do with it what you will.
Give me only your love and your grace,
that is enough for me.
Amen.

- Elton Fernandes, SJ