

Ganz - Reading Aloud the Letters to Peregrinus (v 10 January 2023)

INTRO

These *Letters to Peregrinus*, written each month during the last seven years, are written to a fictional friend of the Faber Institute. I gave him the name "Peregrinus", which is the Latin word for "pilgrim".

Eventually we each understand how it is that we have been "pilgrims" all along.

This is Rick Ganz reading a *Letter to Peregrinus*, whose title is "On Receiving a Grace Profoundly."

LETTER #9 - "On Receiving a Grace Profoundly"

Dear Peregrinus (Wednesday afternoon, 12:30 PM):

You gave to all of us in your Talk this morning a substantial grace. As with all such Talks, the Speaker gives himself or herself, not just well-arranged words. Thank you.

I will be giving myself time, and perhaps for several days, to let have access to me all that you said. When a significant grace is given us, it will take time for us fully to absorb it and correctly to understand it.

What is it about divine grace that puzzles us, causing us to assume when it is richly given us that it must be for someone other than me? *People often struggle to accept what God gives them.* Perhaps we sense that to receive the grace will mean that we can no longer be the same person ... and that scares us.

We, as does Matthew, in the famous painting of him by Caravaggio, "The Call of Matthew," assume that the grace must really be meant for

someone else. You see Matthew there in the painting, light from the open door illuminating him, and Jesus in that door pointing to him. We see Matthew pointing his left hand towards the guy behind him, "You mean *him*, don't you?"



It was somewhere during your Talk, through the carefully developed thoughts you led us, word by word, image by image, that I began to hear in my memory the sound of a hymn that I love. It has stayed with me since then, humming itself inside of me. Its opening stanza is this:

Now the green blade rises from the buried grain,
Wheat that in the dark earth many years has lain;
Love lives again, that with the dead has been:
Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.

And then its closing stanza:

When our hearts are saddened, grieving or in pain,
By Your touch You call us back to life again;
Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:
Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.

I am pondering your comments about PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder]. You spoke to us not as much about what was done to you, and by whom, as *what you became* as a result of their destructive action

in your life.

What you described as having happened to you corresponded to experiences that I myself have had. We have both suffered at the hands of people whom we trusted, to whom we gave our trust. They turned out to be not worthy of what we gave them. We have had to live with this mistake for many years.

These wounds torn into us will become a means of a deeper understanding of ourselves and of the world into which we were sent by God through our parents and family. Over time, we will grasp how these wounds are the surprising source of our deepest and most credible insight into others, and the greatest source of our compassion for the sorrows of others. We all heard this morning the insight and wise judgment – those very great fruits – that was in you because of what you have suffered.

However, at other times, we must admit that such wounds hurt, and we understand that we must suffer them patiently, not letting them keep us from the hard work of relationship, not becoming our excuse for not giving our lives wholeheartedly for the common good. But we do wonder why these wounds have to remain open.

But then we recall the resurrected Christ, Who bore wounds that remained open too.

John 20: ²⁵ So the other^k disciples said to him [Thomas], 'We have seen the Lord,' but he [Thomas] answered, 'Unless I can see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe.'²⁶ Eight days later the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. The doors were closed, but Jesus came in and stood among them. 'Peace be with you,' he said.²⁷ Then he spoke to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side.'²⁸ Thomas replied, 'My Lord and my God!'.^[1]

As you were speaking to us this morning about your experience of trauma and what has come of it in your life, I suddenly saw Christ Himself incandesce in my awareness. I saw Him there before me, filled with Light. His wounds were not obscured, because the Light came *from* those wounds, *through* them. It was the image of Christ Who forever knows, and suffers the bite of, the trauma that He suffered at our hands. "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" How could even the risen Christ have been able to "un-hear" the sound of those people shouting? And as you continued to speak, I thought of a Talk that Christ Himself might have given this morning to us, and how He might have sounded at certain points in His Talk very much like you did.

I wished that Christ would look at you, and that you would notice that He was ... and look back. Christ is the truest mirror through which we see ourselves, the truth of ourselves, and how our wounds, through the power of God, have made us unexpectedly whole. I think of that lovely line from George Herbert's poem, "Love," III, in whose first stanza (see below) the poet gets us to see the "sweetly questioning" face of Christ, whose face is turned to him, the poet, with such frankness and tenderness. Oh, to be looked at like that! Herbert wrote:

Love bade me welcome. Yet my soul drew back
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
If I lacked any thing.

It takes a long time to learn how to look for our reflection *not* in the face of those who have harmed us, who also have hurt others we love, but, instead, to find our reflection in the face of Christ looking at us – that "quick-eyed Love". Can you believe, and accept, what you see there?

I am your friend, who has today received from you so much that is good. Thank you for that gorgeous Talk.

Your friend in Christ the Pilgrim,
Rick

* 14:27; Lk 24:39–40; 1 Jn 1:1; 19:34r

[1] [*The New Jerusalem Bible*](#) (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 1990), Jn 20:25–28.

OUTRO

There is so much that we do not understand - life is simply too complicated. But we **can** know **with Whom** we want to stand - with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - and that we desire to be of help to God in His work among us, in the natural world, and in the whole cosmos.

Living honestly, confidently, and joyfully in, and for, that central friendship with God is the master Goal.

A pilgrim quits trying to **control** his or her life, but to **live** it, accepting the adventure of it each day.

A pilgrim keeps his or her focus on the master Goal, letting God place into his or her life each day the means by which he or she can get closer to that Purpose.

As the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins put it: "For I greet Him the days I meet Him / and bless when I understand." [stanza 5, "The Wreck of the Deutschland"]

Let us, then, take the Adventure that is before us.