

Untying the Knots –

...Open to the Healing Touch of Love

LEAD ME, GUIDE ME

Lead me, guide me in your way
Lead me, guide me in your way
Lead me, guide me in your way
Your holy way, O my God.

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Johann George Schmidner

This painting in the church of St Peter am Perlach in Ausburg, Germany, drew Jesuit Jorge Mario Bergoglio, into deep reflection upon his life. Untying the knots became a metaphor for pondering life, acknowledging what was binding him from living life more faithfully, and then discerning ways to untie these 'knots'. In fact it became a symbol for the people of Argentina when Jorge Bergoglio returned to his homeland. For us too it can become a symbol to open us to the healing touch of God.

A reading from the gospel according to Mark

A leper came to him and pleaded on his knees:

'If you want to you can cure me.'

Feeling sorry for him, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying.

'Of course I want to! Be cured!'

And the leprosy left him at once and he was cured. Jesus immediately sent him away and sternly ordered him,

'Mind you say nothing to anyone, but go and show yourself to the priest, and make the offering for your healing prescribed by Moses as evidence of your recovery.'

The man went away, but then started talking about it freely and telling the story everywhere, so that Jesus could no longer go openly into any town, but had to stay outside in places where nobody lived. Even so, people from all around would come to him.

Mark 1: 40-45

In the time of Jesus leprosy made a person unclean and they were expected to live on the edges of villages away from the flow of daily life within a village. This leper had courage to seek out Jesus and his courage was acknowledged in being cured. But this gesture of healing had consequences for Jesus – he could no longer move freely. He had touched a leper and that was against the law.

At this time in my life's unfolding, from what 'leprosy' do I seek a cure? Something that is alienating a relationship, undermining a community in which I live or work..... something that is eroding the life within me.....this could also be something I am neglecting – time for quiet...

Think again of the image of 'Untying the Knots'... how does this behaviour bind me, tie me in knots? Untying the knots, even one knot will enable God's love to flow more freely in and through my life.

You might pick up the wool, rope or piece of cloth and put some knots in it as a symbol of what is diminishing you as a person....

As we listen to and pray the mantra, *Healing is your Touch*, you might choose one of the knots to untie as a commitment to action that might heal and strengthen....

RELEASE ME FROM THE DARK FURY

O Holy and Haunting Presence
 whose spirit moves quietly
 but surely
in the sound and fury of the world
 and of my life,
you know me
 as rushing water knows the rock
 and releases its beauty
 to reflect new life.

Open me
 to the insistent abrasiveness of your grace,
 for I often trivialize love
 by abandoning the struggles
 which accompany its joys
and rejecting the changes
 which lead to fulfilments.

Release me
 from the dark fury
 of assuming I am unloved
when the day calls for sacrifice
 and the night for courage.

Release me
 from the ominous fear
 of thinking some sin
 or failure of mine
 can separate me from you
when life demands hard choices

and the battle, high risks.

Release me
from the dangerous illusions
of independence
when the human family summons me
to the realities and promises
of interdependence
among races, sexes, nations.

Release me
from being possessed
by riches I do not need
and grievances that weary me
when you call me to share
my very self
with neighbours
and to reflect for the world
the light of the kingdom
within me.

Ted Loder
– *Guerillas of Grace*



HEALING IS YOUR TOUCH

Healing is your touch, O God,
Renewing the Spirit of the broken.
Healing is your touch, O God,
Renewing the spirit of the broken.

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Reflection and Suggestions

Paul Valley's book *Pope Francis: Untying the Knots* draws inspiration from Francis' devotion to this art work as a way of reflecting upon the unfolding of Jorge Bergoglio's life. He names those darker moments in his life as leader of the Jesuits and his difficulties in dealing with the political realities of his times. The image is powerful as we see life's circumstances enable Jorge to reflect upon his past in the light of new experiences and insights gained in his work among the poor in Argentina. This enabled him to begin a journey of 'untying the knots' in his own life and we see today the man he has become. This chance visit to the church in Augsburg became a moment of grace for Jorge and now for us as we respond to the invitations he is offering us as the leader of our faith tradition.

Sometimes it is helpful to have something tactile as we ritualise faith. Thick wool, rope or strands of calico could be given to each person. As the prayer unfolds you might invite people to tie knots symbolic of their own shadow, weakness, failure... you may even invite them to knot it tightly around the arm and feel what a knot can do to the circulation.... And draw the comparison that sin can block the flow of life within us personally and among us as a community.

This prayer could be used in preparation for reconciliation or during Lent.