

## ***Renewed in Christ***

Look I am making the whole of creation new (Revelation 21: 5)

*For anyone who is in Christ there is a new creation: the old order is gone and a new being is there for all to see. It is all God's work.. (2 Corinthians 5:17-18)*

Lent and Easter are seasons of renewal. Just as the bare limbs of trees become clothed in green, and shoots break through the cloying winter mud, so God desires to liberate us from all that holds us back from receiving and giving life.

Renewal may be about a new sense of direction and focus, a freedom from being driven and a freedom to express who we are, a release from fear or lack of self esteem.

Renewal is God shaped, love shaped.

Renewal is a believing and acting in God's belief in us and work for us.

Renewal is not dependent on age or situation; it depends only on God's desire that we shall be free and live fully and so give life and freedom to others.

*Who would have thought my shrivelled heart  
Could have recovered greenness? It was gone  
Quite underground*

From The Flower – a poem by George Herbert



Renewal is what we allow God to do in us and through us

### ***Where we begin:***

We begin with a recognition of need:

Break up your fallow ground: it is time to seek out Yahweh until he comes to rain saving justice upon you

Hosea 10: 12

*O thou lord of life, send my roots rain*

(from a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins)

*O I am root bound! In this earthen Pot  
How many a strangling noose and writhing knot  
Describe contorted misery!..  
O Gardener (if Gardener there be)  
Behold this yellow leaf, and succour me!*

From Pot-bound – a poem by Ruth Pitter

### ***What do you want?***

Just as Jesus spoke to Bartimaeus, the blind beggar, so he speaks to us 'What do you want me to do for you?'

God loves us, accepts us as we are and where we are but loves us enough not to leave us there!

What is it you desire from God? Sometimes we know clearly and can put it into words; it's good to name our desires; Sometimes, however, we do not know more than we are not free, whole, fully alive. In which case it's enough to turn with our heart and soul to God and say 'I need you'.

### ***Being made new***

It is God who renews – but that doesn't mean we are not actively involved. On my allotment I know for sure that no amount of willing can make a single thing grow; growth is something mysterious and other:

*This is what the Kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the land. Night and day, while he sleeps, when he is awake, the seed is sprouting and growing; how, he does not know. (Mark 4: 26-29)*

On the other hand if I don't get out there in the cold wind of February and clear the ground of weeds, feed the soil, then as the earth warms physically put the seeds in and look after them as they grow not much will happen!

If we seek renewal, God will show us step by step the part we have to play. It may be letting go of a destructive way of being or thinking, or acting out our faith that God believes in us, our gifts and potential by taking a step out into the limelight; it might be doing what we believe in rather than what we think others expect us to do.

**Renewal is not one off;** it often begins with a single step but it doesn't stop there. God will take us further if we keep setting our path along the direction he shows us. If we forget and lose the plot for a while – no matter – God begins again with us where we are.

**If it all feels too much,** beyond you, then remember that renewal is a work of God in you and with you; many things that are too much for us become possible in God.

I come back, again and again to the words of an ancient homily for Holy Saturday, where Christ is imagined as seeking out Adam, lost in the tomb:

Christ grasps Adam's hand, raise him up and says:

*'Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.*

*I am your God, who for your sake became your son, who for you and your descendants now speak and command with authority those in prison: Come forth, and those in darkness: Have light, and those who sleep: Rise.*

*I command you: Awake sleeper, I have not made you to be held a prisoner in the underworld. Arise from the dead; I am the life of the dead. Arise, O work of my hands, arise you were fashioned in my image.*

***Rise let us go hence; for you in me and I in you, together we are one undivided person.'***

## Exercises:

**1)** Sometimes when we're seeking to bring about inner renewal it helps to tackle something outer that needs renewal, for example:  
A cluttered room that feels without clear purpose or life  
Bringing order to unrestrained mountains of paper  
A 'dead' or messy area of your garden: is there anything in your garden that needs to be uprooted – something that takes up space but provides very little in return? Dig it up! You may have an area of your garden that's neglected – overgrown and dull: change it! It doesn't have to be that way.  
Making an external change can give the impetus for inner change to happen too – we become more open and energised.

**2)** As you contemplate a change you desire to make but find perhaps daunting or fearful, read the words from the Holy Saturday homily :  
*Rise let us go hence; for you in me and I in you, together we are one undivided person.*  
Lent and Easter is the contemplation not just of what Christ did in history but of how Christ is with us and in us now, facing challenges with us and bringing us to resurrection.

**3)** If you have a sense from God of a new direction, name it as a road: for example 'Freedom Way' or 'Belief in Myself Street'. Remember your road name and ask God to help you continue moving along it.

**4)** Read the accounts of Jesus meeting people after the resurrection; for example meeting Mary Magdala in the garden, the road to Emmaus, the disciples meeting Jesus by the lake shore whilst fishing, Jesus coming into a locked room where his disciples were.  
The risen Christ appears to his followers when they least expected him and often when they felt low; they often failed to recognise him.  
Christ will meet you along your road: pray to be awake to these meetings and to know that he who has called you will never leave or forsake you.

*For I greet him the days I meet him, and bless when I understand*  
(From the Wreck of the Deutschland – a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins)

Chris Chapman

