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Mercy MOMENTS

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Agents of Mercy – The Vulnerable Ones



Renewal, transformation and healing can come to us in many ways and from many different sources. The body can heal itself. A secular university professor may open a new thought and direction in our lives.

While Christians believe that wholesome change can come through prayer and the sacraments, through the hearing of the gospel and through the pastoral ministry of the Church or their brothers and sisters in the faith, they also believe that blessings can and do come in many other ways. This is because they believe that God through the Spirit is wonderfully and mysteriously at work in the world. God works through the Church but also in and through the world.

This makes the journey of faith a wonderfully open space. The Christian life has nothing to do with narrowing the arteries of one's inner being. Instead, the life of faith is opening one's heart to the God of surprises.

But this, of course, is more easily said than done. The surprises of God are often strange. And we may well be resistant to or completely miss seeing the good that comes our way. At my initial place of work in the printing and publishing world, there was a work colleague who was stridently

anti-religious. And yet he cared for me in many ways, and challenged me regarding the way I was living my faith.

Nouwen has written about the way in which his care for Adam, a severely disabled person, became a ministry of receiving and not only one of giving. Nouwen writes, 'In his weakness he (Adam) became a unique instrument of God's grace. He became a revelation of Christ among us.'

That God uses unlikely people for his purposes is everywhere written large in the biblical story: Moses the murderer; Amos a mere orchard worker; Mary an impoverished maiden; Simon the political radical and disciple of Christ.

While we may want the experience of God's unmediated presence – and those moments may be there – and we may want God's Spirit to bless us in the sanctuary – and that may well occur – God also has other ways to renew and transform us. Seldom are the instruments of God's goodness the powerful of this world. More frequently God uses the vulnerable ones of the earth.

All of this poses a great challenge to the present ethos of Western Christianity, where Christians still see themselves as powerful in resources and having much to give. As a consequence, their dependency on God is not a characteristic posture. The challenge for Western Christians is the challenge of receptivity, not one of generosity. This is an openness to enter more fully into the life that God seeks to give. And an openness to move slowly enough and to be close enough to the Adams of this world, whom God may use to draw us into a greater love and wholeness.

Source: *Hear the Heartbeat* by Charles R Ringma with Henri Nouwen.

REFLECTION

> What challenges you in Ringma's call to discover God's goodness in the vulnerable?