

Donnybrook

8 October 2021

Welcome

It is very early in the morning for such strange, even grim readings. It is not an obvious way to start the day, with positive energy. What are we to make of them?

Steps

The call to conversion is very clear in Joel. There is even a list of those addressed: elders, priests, drunkards, farmers and vintners. The Hebrew word for conversion is very simply: to return, to go back to God. The Gospel tells of Jesus' power over sickness, really over evil, a central claim of the Christian proclamation. But the last paragraph takes it a step further: passive acknowledgement of grace is not enough. On the contrary, we are all called to positive and conscious engagement.

This call to constant conversion of heart and life is the opening proclamation of Jesus himself, when he announced: Mark 1:15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; convert, and believe in the good news." (Mark 1:15).

How deep this is meant to be can be heard in the letter to the Philippians, where we read:

My aim is to know him, to experience the power of his resurrection, to share in his sufferings, and to be like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already attained this—that is, I have not already been perfected—but I strive to lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus also laid hold of me. (Philippians 3:10-12 NET)

Why is it all so demanding? Could it be for this reason? God loves each one of us to a depth we can barely comprehend. Putting it very human terms, God's desire is that we respond to that love from the deepest place within myself. In the words of John's Gospel: I came that they may have life, life in abundance. Not a bad way to start the day, after all.