



Teachings from Reverend Robert John

Making the Able More Able

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.
John 1:1-5, 9-14*

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fulness of God.

*Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever.
Amen.
Ephesians 3:14-21*

MAKING THE ABLE MORE ABLE is one of the foundational precepts upon which our Centre has been established and built. And it is a precept that continues to be fundamental to the spiritual life in us individually and together in our Centre communities. As we engage with the principle of making the able more able in our being, living and relating, we are strengthening the I AM in ourselves and in others. This is an important aspect of the work set before us by Rev Antoinette in this Year of Faith.

In my own work with the principle of making the able more able during the year, I decided to do some research on this in Mario's writings thinking he was bound to have said something really inspiring and enlightening. I came across a document that supposedly had something to do with making the able more able and found this amazing quote. At first, I wasn't sure exactly what it had to do with making the able more able, but it certainly caught and held my attention. In a chapter from his Deliberations on St Mark, Mario said to each one of us: "You have made a muck of things in the heavens!"

The idea that I, and you, have made a muck of things in the heavens wasn't what I'd been looking for, but it got my attention and it certainly got me thinking ... We have made a muck of things in the heavens! The context in which Mario spoke about this is in his reflection and commentary on the passage in Mark's gospel that has to do with giving to Caesar what is Caesar's (Mark 12:17a). Mario says:

You have come into this world because you bloody well deserved to come into the flesh. You have made a muck of things in the heavens. Do

you think that the Lord has sent you down into this world to take it easy, or to have it easy? He sent you to learn a particular lesson. The lesson is how to handle your own affairs. If you cannot handle your own affairs in the world, how will you be able to handle the affairs of the kingdom of heaven?

The work of learning to handle our life and our affairs here in this earthly incarnation is quite a challenging thing that Mario places before us. For if we can't do that, then there is no way we are going to be able to handle the things of the spirit. Part of the work of us becoming more able is learning more about the capacity to deal with the affairs of our life here in this world as a basis and as a foundation for spiritual unfoldment. Ableness, first and foremost, begins with living in the flesh, living well here on this earth, here in this world, and establishing a very real and substantial basis for the working of spirit.

The Centre motto of making the able more able is something that we can indeed apply to ourselves and within our own being. It is not just about our relationships with one another. First of all it needs to be about our relationship with our own self. What is it that is able within us? We must identify that point of ableness within us for ourselves. It will be different for each one of us, and for each of us that ability may be different aspects of our being at different times of our life. What is the able within me? What is the able within you? By identifying this, by working with it, by making use of it and manifesting it you become more able; we each become more able.

In his *Deliberations on St Mark*, when Mario was talking about us learning to handle our earthly affairs, he didn't just briefly comment on this and then swiftly change his direction back to 'more spiritual things'. He went on and on for pages and pages about our earthly living in very fundamental and basic ways. He talked about money. What you do with your money? For if you can't look after your money and manage your finances, then you are of no use to spirit. If you can't turn up to things

on time, you are of no use to spirit. If you can't deal with the basic things in your existence then the spirit is unable to work through you. You are unable, incapable of being a living expression in which the power of Christ can become manifest here in this earth. That's quite a challenging thing for each of us to consider for there are areas where we are not able, where we have some degree of ability but where more is needed. We can each identify these things and work to develop them. By identifying the ability that we do have, and by working with that, it is added to, it is strengthened. However, that work begins first and foremost here in the flesh.

What is it that is able within us? We must identify that point of ableness for ourselves. It will be different for each one of us, and for each of us that ability may be different aspects of our being at different times of our life. What is able within me? What is able within you? By identifying this, by working with it, by making use of it and manifesting it you become more able; we each become more able.

Cast your mind back to creation, and since you probably can't consciously remember the actual experiences of the creation, remember what you have read about it in the book of Genesis. There in the creation story we are told that we are created in the image of the divine. Within our earthly existence, within our flesh lies a spiritual identity which connects us with the spiritual worlds. Living in the flesh we have to be very connected with the work of actually being present in our lives, but we also have to be mindful of the spirit that makes itself manifest in and through our earthly existence.

In New Testament Greek, the word for 'able', the word for 'ability' is the Greek *dunamis*. In our bibles, *dunamis* is often translated as 'power', sometimes as 'might', and sometimes as 'able' and 'ability'. We probably recognize words in English that come from the Greek root *dunamis*: dynamite, dynamism, dynamic. So there is a hint to us about what our ableness needs to be. It needs to be dynamic. We need to be dynamic. We need to have the power to change things, and to shape and mould our

lives. Sometimes that might mean demolishing something within ourselves to make way for the new. Or it might be mining for the riches of our being through the spiritual power that comes to us in our ability. Reflect on the various ways dynamite and dynamic energy are used.

The word *dunamis* means more specifically 'power from action', and it is power from the action of the divine in us. In the text from Ephesians we read:

... that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might (that is the word dunamis – power, might, ability, ableness) through his Spirit in the inner man Ephesians 3:16

Power is granted to us by Christ, and it is strengthened within us by Christ. But to be strengthened, it first needs to be there. We have the task of establishing the beginnings of ableness, the beginnings of ability within us, if Christ is going to empower that, and empower us that we may work with spiritual power in our life. Paul goes on to say:

Now to him who by the power (ie dunamis) at work within us is able (again dunamis) to do far more abundantly Ephesians 3:20

Each of the varied and different uses of the word 'energeia' gives us insight into how we can work with the ability, the power that we identify within ourselves. This working or power or ableness within us is about vitality, activity, efficiency. It is about effectiveness in our activity. It is about action that produces results. It is about action that produces the desired and purposed result. It is about action that is actual, not just potential ...

Here Paul links two things together. *Dunamis* which is 'ableness', 'power', 'might', with the word 'work' – in Greek, *energeia*. Often Paul talks about power in relation to work and the working of power within us.

There is a strong connection between ability and working, and we can probably sense, even if we haven't studied New Testament Greek, something of the nature of that

working from the Greek word *energeia* – energy, vitality!

If we look at the Greek New Testament and other classical Greek texts connected with the use of the word *energeia* we get a much fuller sense of what it means to be working with the ability within us. This word *energeia* is used to describe that which is abundantly, radiantly and vividly alive. We need to work with those things within us that are abundantly, vividly and radiantly alive. It describes action rather than inaction. It is used to talk about a person who is on duty in their profession or their calling. It is about being ready for action, being ready to respond with that we are called to live out.

The word *energeia* is used in a military sense as well, to talk about being on active service. It is used to talk about being industrious, efficient and fit for active service. It is used to describe a vigorous attack, an effective weapon, a march that is made with rapidity. We need to be active, we need to be effective, we need to be vigorous. We need to be able to move in our lives with speed; to respond promptly to the challenges that confront us.

Energeia is also used in relation to agriculture, where it describes land which is *cultivated* and therefore *productive*. It is used to describe a mine in which minerals are produced. A mine that hasn't been worked out, mined out, as yet. It is used to describe money and capital that isn't just left laying somewhere but is actually *used and invested* in order to *generate* interest. It is used to describe a mill in working order. And it is used to describe the working day rather than the sabbath day which is a day of rest.

Each of these varied and different uses of the word *energeia* give us insight into how we can work with the ability, the power that we identify within ourselves. This working or power or ableness within us is about vitality, activity, efficiency. It is about effectiveness in

our activity. It is about action that produces results. It is about action that produces the desired and purposed result. It is about action that is actual, not just potential. This word is used about those gifts and qualities within us that we have actually already manifest. Not the ones that are there as a seed and we might someday manifest if we get round to it, or when circumstances suit us.

This word *energeia* – this working of power, this working of ableness – speaks about the demonstration of our inner characteristics through our deeds, and through the character that we build up and express in our life. It is about goodness and efficiency combined to produce effective and purposeful action in our being, living and relating.

Energeia talks to us about something that has been done actively, purposefully, consciously rather than something that is merely suffered or endured or experienced. We are required to be engaged in our lives, to be engaged in whatever we do. Not to be victims or helpless or swayed by the things that come to us, but to deal with our lives.

In Ephesians 3:17 we read that Paul prays for us:

... and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

The 'dwelling' that Paul is talking of relates to a Greek term with the meaning of 'permanent residence' – permanent rather than temporary residence. It is about us building a permanent place for Christ within us, not just something temporary where we respond one moment because of an impulse within us, and then forget about it. Then there is no longer any dwelling place. We often use the word 'abiding' with that sense of permanent residency. It is about Christ's presence abiding with us in an ongoing and permanent manner. It is about us inviting that presence, because Christ doesn't enter into our being through force. He responds to our openness, our readiness and our invitation to him to abide with and within us.

In the Prologue to John's Gospel are words we all know:

*To all who **received** him, who believed in his name, he gave power (the ability) to become children of God.*

We need to invite Christ into our hearts. We need to receive him, and make our hearts and our minds a permanent, abiding dwelling place for his presence. In doing that, ability will be given to us and we will receive the spiritual power to exercise our divine inheritance, that image of divinity established within our being at the very creation of this world.

Paul goes on, in his Letter to the Ephesians, to talk about this presence of Christ strengthening the ability that is within us. One of the ways in which we strengthen Christ's abiding presence is through sharing in the mysteries of bread and wine. Often, when we distribute the bread and the wine, we use words like "May Christ be strengthened within you", "May the presence of Christ be strengthened within you", or "May the presence of Christ continue to grow within you".

The passage from Ephesians is a prayer that Paul prays for unity. It is a prayer for unity within self. It is a prayer for unity with one another. It is a prayer for unity between groups and nations. It is a prayer for unity between the flesh and the spirit, between the heavens and the earth. It is a prayer for us as individuals, and it is a prayer for us as the community of Christ, his church.

When we establish ability within us, when we built that ability within us, then greater ability, greater power will be added ...

Paul, as we know from his writings, has an image of the church which he describes as the body of Christ. We are the body of Christ: Christ the head and we the members, the body that lives and works and functions in unity and according to the purpose bestowed upon each one of us, each aspect of Christ's body. For us to be that body of Christ we

must be able, we must be active and purposeful, we must be effective in what we do and what we manifest. Only then is the spirit of Christ fully manifest in this world. Christ is the head, the consciousness. And we are the body that – through our work and through our ability – gives expression and manifestation to what that immense consciousness holds. In order for us to achieve this, though, we must be able, for then to our ability Christ will add his ability, his dynamic power. He will make the able more able.

Remember the parable of the talents, and how the talents get doled out? Someone gets one and someone else gets five, and someone else gets ten. Later there is the reckoning of what people have done with the talents they each received. Towards the end of that parable, Christ says:

*For to every one who has more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not even what he has will be taken away.
Matthew 25:29*

To make the able more able within us we have to establish our ability to live in this world with a consciousness of Christ's presence shaping and forming and guiding our expression and our living. When we establish that ability within us, when we build that ability within us, then greater ability, greater power will be added.

May we each strive to make ourselves more able, for then Christ can add spiritual power to our ability. Then we can truly become his active, living, purposeful presence in this world. Then we can be the body of Christ.

So shall it be

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