

Reflection from the *'Little Book of Lent'* – an anthology composed by Reverend Canon Arthur Howells (2014, London: Harper Collins) comprising extracts from several of his favourite spiritual writers and reproduced here with his kind permission.

7. Tuesday, Week Four

For Reflection

Kathy Galloway is a minister of the Church of Scotland in great demand as a preacher, retreat conductor and broadcaster. In 2002 she became the first woman to be elected leader of the Iona Community. She has published several books including Love Burning Deep: Poems and Lyrics, Struggles to Love: The Spirituality of the Beatitudes, and Imagining the Gospels. This extract is from Getting Personal

Lessons from Peter

Jesus wanted his followers to be seekers, the teachers to be learners also, not people who had all the answers, who doled out enlightenment like commodity brokers, but people who were aware of their own need to seek truth, who would continue to question until the day they died. In Peter's blindness lay the seeds of his sight.

And what about the simple fisherman, unversed in religious language, untutored in the subtleties of theology. Fishing was in his blood; it was his vocation. In trouble, his instinct was not to pray or organize but to go fishing. But Jesus didn't seem to want a priest or a theologian. He wanted a fisherman. When Peter was first rushed to Jesus by his brother Andrew on the shores of Lake Galilee, he didn't know that he had taken a long road that would lead to Jerusalem and then to Rome. But it was the fisherman who was needed on that road when the priests and the theologians lost the way. It was the language of bread and fish and water and catches that spoke to the hearts of men and women, not the pieties of the religious. And it was the ordinary man, trauchled with the cares and responsibilities that are the lot of most of us, who took his wife and his life with him, who affirmed the life of faith as a possibility for all people burdened by life, not just as something for those set aside and apart. He had no refuge in religious formulae, no retreat into holier-than-thou posturing. Only his given self, following Jesus wherever that road led. There are many forms of ministry, and we are all called to walk in different ways. But all of us are called as the people we are, not to some received picture of ministry. I find one of the most reassuring things about Peter is that he continued to be himself – impetuous, misguided, often getting it wrong. We read about him, for example, later on arguing with Paul and being severely dressed down for it. This endears him to me greatly, as someone who has many arguments with Paul. How comforting to know that Peter went on being himself, went on making mistakes, did not turn into some identikit model church leader. It is sometimes hard for us to make sense of how we experience God working in our lives; sometimes there seems to be so little rhyme or reason in what we're doing that it's tempting to try to make ourselves into what we think we ought to be, rather than discovering what we are. It is hard to believe that we are exactly the people needed, so inadequate do we feel. Well, Peter felt like that, and Moses and Samuel, and so even did Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. We are never alone in our fears. But, like Peter, perhaps we can learn that our love, however feeble, however flawed it seems, will be used, will matter, if we don't give up on it; and it will be imperfect love, not the ideal love of our illusions, that will enable us to walk on water.

GETTING PERSONAL
KATHY GALLOWAY

Scripture Reading
ST MATTHEW 14:22-33

*'Peter got out of the boat,
started walking on the water,
and came towards Jesus'*

Prayer

Lord, help me now to unclutter my life,
to organize myself in the direction of simplicity.

Lord, teach me to listen to my heart;
teach me to welcome change, instead of fearing it.

Lord, I give You these stirrings inside me,
I give You my discontent,
I give You my restlessness,
I give You my doubt,
I give You my despair,
I give You all the longings I hold inside.
Help me to listen to these signs of change, of growth;
to listen and follow where they lead
through the breathtaking
empty space of an open door.

FROM CELTIC DAILY PRAYER