

This meditation is from Nathan D. Mitchell, from the booklet, *Daybreaks: Daily Reflections for Lent and Easter* (by Liguori Publications).

A Reflection on the First Week of Lent

The Importance of Being Nobody

Emily Dickinson begins one of her poems by declaring “I’m nobody!” She then asks her readers, “Are you nobody too?” Dickinson’s words are not simply a manifesto against self-importance. She thinks of being “nobody” as a blessing, not a diminishment. As many modern Scripture scholars point out, Jesus too was a “nobody from nowhere,” a marginal Jewish layperson from Galilee, an unimportant—even suspect—region. One reason, perhaps, why we know so little about what Jesus said and did from the time he was twelve until he was a mature adult is simply that his contemporaries didn’t see anything special or extraordinary about him. Saint Paul too was a “nobody” who argued vigorously against fat-cat “super-apostles” who were more eloquent, more impressive, and better looking than he was (see 2 Corinthians 11). Weakness, Paul claimed, was the surest sign God had chosen him for ministry among those other “have-nots,” the gentiles.

In a culture that overvalues celebrity, salutes success, and often demonizes the poor and the weak, we Christians are called to witness the importance of being nobody. Looking at our lives today we might ask: How—here, now, in my community—am I being invited to become a voice for the voiceless, an advocate for the abandoned, a companion for the ill and elderly, a source of hope for the hopeless? At the table with his friends the night before he died, Jesus, that “nobody from nowhere,” declared that bread broken and shared had become his body. He revealed to us the “eucharistic law” that prevails throughout the universe: each of us is meant to become food for the hungry, bread for the life of the world.

Embrace the strength of weakness.