

FAITH AND REASON

Waiting in silence for the Spirit's voice: We hear God's "voice" mediated for us in Sacred Scripture, in the book of nature, and in our sacramental lives of communion with others that include the happenings of our daily lives. Within an ecclesial community seeking to do God's will, we have a surety that we hear God's "word for our salvation" in Christ through the Holy Spirit.

In traditions of prayer, God also speaks to our souls personally but contingently in a mode of private prayer that expresses our desire to hear God's voice within the recesses of our inner experiences. Interior communion with Christ through the Holy Spirit demands habits of contemplative silence and waiting. Contemplation is a wordless surrender to God's will in one's life; it is a pointed consciousness that listens for God's most intimate communications within one's soul.

Thomas Merton wrote that "waiting in silence" was the doorway into these unitive moments of a wordless dialogue with God. In Contemplative Prayer, he described contemplatives as those who forego emphasis on speaking their own minds to become other-directed in silent attention to another voice that might, but not necessarily, be "heard" in their hearts.

Contemplative prayer is a waiting without expecting any kind of "transformation:" not even a "transformation of darkness into light." Nothing is "anticipated" or "prayed for." One "waits on the Word of God in silence" if a "word" is heard, it is heard within the silence itself. The silence, Merton wrote, "suddenly and inexplicably reveals itself as a word of great power, full of the Voice of God." There are no set times in a life of prayer for inner dialogues with God. The Spirit speaks directly within our hearts when God wills. Our silence is our response, a willingness to be permeable to God's word for our personal salvation. Silence signifies our obedience to the hidden inner presence of the "Lord and Giver of Life." Silence exposes us to gratitude and love for the Spirit whose presence always permeates our being. Silence is loving God "through a glass darkly." It is probably best to doubt that the Holy Spirit has anything personal to say to us.

Infused contemplation is a gift. The response is grateful acceptance and a conscious willing to love God more in everything that happens to us. St. Bernard of Clairvaux wrote of his own moments of consciously sensing God's real presence within him as infrequent: "How rare the visits, how brief the stay."

Our ordinary, daily spiritual habits for listening to God's word remain concentrated on *lectio divina*, on being simple and direct in disciplined, moral behavior, and on consistently receiving the sacraments of ecclesial communion "in Christ" with all our world's neighbors. All these works are graced and induce an inner climate of gratitude.

In her poem "Praying," Mary Oliver advises that we not seek the "blue iris" of profound insights in poetry or prayer. She suggests we pay attention to simple things like "weeds in a vacant lot, or a few small stones." Waiting upon the smaller things is another mode of attention to the Holy Spirit's visitations. Our simple, personal prayers become the "doorway into thanks, and a silence in which / another voice may speak..." **Jonathan Montaldo**

Urgency of love: In the last two weeks, we received a set of parables from Jesus on the theme of discernment: the rich fool and the vigilant and faithful servant. From these stories, we learn not to waste our time and energy on earthly treasures but on heavenly treasures that "no thief can reach, nor moth destroy." We learned to avoid being lazy but instead to be vigilant by doing what we ought as faithful servants. We know the what and the how, but what about the when? How do we know when the moment has arrived when a decision must be made?

Many of us delay making an important decision for various reasons: fear of the unknown, laziness, or patterns of procrastination. Today, Jesus points out one of the natural consequences of a decision: it creates division, "Do not think I have come to establish peace on earth. No, I tell you, but rather division." We fear division because we sometimes wrongly believe that the ideal life is a life without drama, challenges or sufferings. This vision is not based on reality. It's the ups and downs of life that keep us alive. When these opposing moments are not present, we flatline. Pope Benedict XVI said, "You were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness." Greatness compels us to move from fear to love.

Jesus' ardent love is an active love and possesses a sense of urgency, "I have come to set the earth on fire and how I wish it were already blazing!" Urgency is an aspect of authentic love that keeps us from laziness, delay, coldness of heart and confinement, and opens us to truth, warmth, life and joy.

The decision for authentic love reveals false forms of love of our past which naturally includes relationships of blood. As important as these relationships are, they do not constitute all the essentials of our salvation, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers? Whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother." (Mt 12:48, 50) We are called to transform blood bonds to bonds of faith capable of bringing us from this life into the next.

Autumn Months: O God of Creation, you have blessed us with the changing of the seasons. As we welcome the autumn months, may the earlier setting of the sun remind us to take time to rest. May the brilliant colors of the leaves remind us of the wonder of your creation. May the steam of our breath in the cool air remind us that it is you who give us the breath of life. May the harvest from the fields remind us of the abundance we have been given and bounty we are to share with others. May the dying of summer's spirit remind us of your great promise that death is temporary, and life is eternal. We praise you for your goodness forever and ever.

The Merton Prayer: My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore, will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone... **Thoughts in Solitude**

A Thought For the Day

Sunday	When you see God in everyone, then they see God in you.
Monday	I believe though I do not comprehend, and I hold by faith what I cannot grasp with the mind.
Tuesday	Think well. Speak well. Do well. These three things, through the mercy of God, will make a man go to Heaven.
Wednesday	Prayer is not so much a way to find God as a way of resting in him...who loves us, who is near to us.
Thursday	Reason is in fact the path to faith, and faith takes over when reason can say no more.
Friday	Happiness is not a matter of intensity but of balance, order, rhythm, and harmony.
Saturday	Our whole life is a meditation of our last decision – the only decision that matters.

The Catholic Priesthood: At the last supper Jesus Christ took bread into His sacred hands, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to His Apostles saying: Take ye and eat this is my Body. In a like manner also, taking the chalice He gave thanks and bade them drink it saying: Drink ye all of this. For this is my Blood. Then He added Do this for a commemoration of Me. By these final words He gave to His Apostles and to their lawful successors the power of changing bread and wine into His own Body and Blood. Jesus Christ also gave to His Apostles and their successors the divine power of forgiving sins. He said to them: As the Father hath sent Me I also send you. Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain they are retained. Finally, Our Divine Lord commissioned His Apostles and their successors to continue His work and promised to be with them till the end of time. He said to them: All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth: Going, therefore, teach all nations. teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and behold, I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world. Priests are, therefore, till the end of time, the ambassadors of God to men. To His priests God has given sublime powers not given to His angels...**Rev. T. Foy - Ireland.**

Love of Others: St. Paul writes "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Galatians 5:14). Only if you know how to love yourself, will I entrust your neighbor to you to be loved. If you do not yet know how to love yourself. I am afraid you are only too likely to cheat your neighbor of love as you are cheating yourself. If you love living an immoral life, you do not love yourself. If you hate your soul by loving only your flesh, both will rise together at the end of time but only to be tormented **St. Augustine**

Affliction comes to us all but not to make us sad, but sober, not to make us sorry, but wise; not to make us despondent, but by its darkness to refresh us, as the night refreshes the day; not to impoverish, but to enrich us, as the plough enriches the field; to multiply our joy, as the seed, by planting, is multiplied a thousand-fold.

In His Will is Our Peace

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