

The Coming of the Light

Contents:

A short reflection to do at home, either alone or with your family

Some links to other resources



A Short Devotional – The Coming of the Light

The format for this devotional comes from the Ignatian website Sacred Space and is suitable for either one person or a family to practice together – though one person will need to be nominated to ‘direct’.

First step – make yourselves comfortable. Make a drink if you’d like to. Equip your self with a Bible, and also a journal (for thoughts). You may like some quiet music in the background. You may also find it helpful to have a focus table – perhaps with a small cross, or a picture that you

find inspirational, or a pleasing object or two (shells, flowers, paperweights, rocks ... let the Spirit lead you – be playful!)

Work through the Devotional – there are guides in the footnotes if you get stuck.

Presence

Dear Lord, as I come to you today
Fill my heart and my whole being
with the wonder of your presence.¹

Freedom

I try to let go of concerns and worries that may be dragging me down at this present moment.

I place any concerns I have in God's hands – at least for these few moments of prayer.²

Consciousness

Conscious of your presence, Lord
I look over my recent past.
Let me be honest with myself about how I've been
And what I've done,
Because I know you love truth in the heart

¹ Read the prayer, spend a moment or two in silence. Notice the sounds you can hear – those far away. Don't try to name them. Notice fainter sounds ... then those which are nearer. Just be present to them. Notice your heartbeat – your rhythm of life ... Notice the sound of silence in your place of prayer, and within yourself. Listen like this for a few moments. (*Praying in Lent – Donal Neary SJ*)

² If it helps list them in your journal. I call this my 'spiritual brain dump'!

And accept me just as I am.³

The Word of God

Ephesians 5:8-14 and John 9:1-41⁴

Reflection

When Jesus came to earth, to live and walk with humanity the whole structure of the known world, forever and irrevocably changed. Here, in the epistle, and in the story of the man born blind, we see a little vignette about just how those at the time dealt with the challenges that Jesus brought to their thinking, their faith, and their perception of reality.

Our gospel story is interesting, with the interplay between a disabled, but nonetheless articulate man, his parents, Jesus and, the religious elite, Jesus.

The Pharisees were concerned with something that over-rode their theology. They liked clear-cut answers to life's conundrums. Sickness equals sin – and so this man (or his parents) must have sinned. The fact of this man's healing was 'theology-changing, seismic stuff' according to Bishop Tom Wright. We too, often, like answers – and are rattled by changing circumstances. I can remember the onset of the charismatic renewal and all the furore about whether this was indeed, from God, or somewhere darker. There is the fear of the unknown coupled with veering off track as well.

The man's parents decided to sit on the fence and let him answer for himself. This is the path of least resistance. This is also a path that can lead to apathy and a failure to engage with the living and very present God.

The Blind Man had already told the Pharisees that he believed Jesus to be a 'prophet'. He was absolutely clear that his healing had come from

³ Review the past 24 hours, with no self-judgement. Bring to Him both the good times and the bad times. Review your mood and ask God to show you anything he might want to highlight. Thank him for 'glory moments' and ask for strength for any weakness.

⁴ Time to use your Bible!

Jesus' hands. The Pharisees questioned him yet again, trying to get him to accredit his healing to God, not Jesus – who they had branded a 'sinner'. And so he was put out of the synagogue and Jesus approached him again, with an invitation to explore what he is feeling, and go a bit deeper in his faith journey. I love his response - ³⁸ *He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him.*

This whole gospel reading deals with our responses when faced with God at work. It is perfectly okay not to understand what God is doing, to be confused, and seek clarification... but it is not okay to pretend that you know it all. Our Pharisee friends were full of self-importance, absolutely sure of their theology, and were 'spiritually blind'... they could not see the gift that God was giving to our world ... I have some sympathy with the man's parents. They were faced with a baffling changed reality. Their reaction was to draw back and not engage with what had happened. I would hope that eventually they praised God for their son's healing. And then we have our previously blind friend – refusing to deny his experience, and absolutely sure that what he had received must be from God – teachable, open and ready to receive all that God had... despite any kickback. He even challenged the Pharisees to become disciples ...

So my encouragement to us all is to be open to the workings of God... and these don't stop throughout our lives. And sometimes it is really difficult to determine what He is saying to us, but be assured, Jesus

always comes to us with words of life and healing if we are open to his wisdom.⁵

Conversation

Jesus, You are always there waiting for me. Sometimes I get bogged down with the concerns of this life. Grant that I may be still more often. To know Your peace, your calm.⁶

Conclusion

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and every shall be, world without end. Amen.

Links

<https://www.sacredspace.ie>

<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-in-daily-prayer> *(also available as an app)*

<https://churchmissionsociety.org/our-stories/lament-for-lent/>

<https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/app/reflections-for-daily-prayer>

⁵ Questions to ponder:

Are there times when you hold on to your views. Is God talking to you about those? We all get set in our ideas – even in ‘normal’ life – and we why socially isolate is one to think about, why cancel public worship?

Are there areas God is asking us to take a stand? It is easy to take that path of least resistance sometimes.

Are we engaging in conversation with Jesus in prayer – is He asking us to go deeper, walk more closely, develop our understanding and relationship with Him.

⁶ Imagine Jesus sitting close to you (use your imagination here) and talk to Him. Listen to what he might say back! When we think, we generally talk to ourselves. When we pray we talk to God. (Anthony de Mello SJ Sadhana)