

Institute Voluntas Dei – October 2016 Lesson

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In Intimacy with Jesus (Mediations, 1-6, pp 37-52)

Opening Prayer: “I Am With You” (p. 169)

My little ones, I am with you. I love you, I see myself in you; make me known; make me loved.

I have given you this mission: to prepare the paths, to level the mountains.

I walk with you; through you I send my Spirit.

I am in you, I act through you, with you and in you.

With me you say “Abba, Father.”

My Father and I are one, ware in you, you are in us, your limits are not obstacles.

They are advertisements that draw my attention and that of my Father.

With our Spirit, we hasten towards you, and dwell in you.

I am the whole of your life; all the same, you do not use enough energy

In giving me your weaknesses.

I would do more for you if you were more attentive to my spirit.

Cultivate silence in my presence, listen more to others,

And I will enlarge my power of action through you.

I am not interested in keeping my power to myself, I am interested in passing it to others through you.

But you must become more aware of the love I bring you.

Let yourself be loved; be submissive, be docile, be simple, be a child.

When you have no more personal resistance, I will fill you to overflowing with my strength.

That is the game of love.

You will understand what I am for you. It is with the heart that we understand love. Amen.

“Availability for the Incarnation” (Mediations 1 & 2)

In the introduction to his text *The Jesus I Never Knew*, Philip Yancey provides a list of images of Jesus that include things like “A Victorian Nanny”; “A Star Trek Vulcan”; “A Mr. Rogers” kind of person. He then tries to get the reader to face the reality of the incarnation. Fr. Parent attempts a similar engagement by depicting Jesus as “a man of his time and place.” Jesus inserted himself fully into the time, place, and culture of his life. In this he reveals himself as a “specialist of the ordinary.”

Often enough we can wish that we were in a different circumstance – have a bit more harmonious family life; not facing the limitations of age or illness; have a different job; find a really engaging and vibrant parish... Jesus inserted himself into his own ordinary circumstances – the poor, rugged hill country of Nazareth; a family of basic means; countryside of political revolutionaries; the oppressive power of Rome. He shared life with ordinary working people. There he was formed in faith and lived his faith. “And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man” (Lk 2:52).

In this Jesus calls us, as his disciples, to insert ourselves into our current circumstances. This can mean setting aside our hopes, dreams, wishes or prayers for a different circumstance. And even if we are called to change some part of our lives, it would seem we cannot unless we recognize the presence of God in our present moment.

Likewise, inserting ourselves into the present, in the presence of God, calls the Voluntas member to be that presence of God in Christ for the others who are part of our lives.

Questions:

1. How “made like us in all things but sin” do we really believe Jesus to be?
2. How can we incarnate the real presence of Christ in our present circumstance?
3. Are we ready to risk, like Mary, to allow God to make himself present in and through us?

“The Present Moment” (Meditations 3 & 4)

Fr. Parent proposes that to live in the present moment is to trust God. We must trust that God is really present to us in the ordinary circumstances of our everyday lives. Quite often we can be tempted to think that this divine presence comes only as a great miracle; a spectacular display of creation’s beauty; the overwhelmingly successful completion of a great task.

Another temptation that keeps us from trusting or finding God in the present moment comes when we live in the past – especially its hurts and disappointments. The past proves useful when it “becomes a runway from which my soul can take off to live the present with generosity” (p. 42). To live too much in the future can lead us to put our own design on the plan of God.

Karl Rahner reflects, “God it is not that my days are boring. It is I who is boring” (“God of My Everyday Life”, *Prayers for a Lifetime*). He notes how we can get too caught up in the routine of things; feel ourselves burdened by the responsibilities of everyday life; preoccupied with the wares in the storage house of our life. We can lose sight of God really present to us in the everyday.

Questions:

1. Fr. Parent contends we can really live in the present moment by being present to God, others, and events; to take notice of the goodness, beauty, and truth that surround us. How might the absence of criticism help us to live in the present moment?
2. How might a deeper appreciation of the present moment enhance our ability to serve without complaining?

“In the Heart of the World Where Christ Has His Rights” (Meditations 5 & 6).

These meditations emphasize how God in Christ takes on a real human life in all its stages – child, adolescent, young person, and adult. While as divine Christ “can do everything” he inserts himself fully and adapts himself to all situations. He gathers to himself all kinds of people.

Likewise, Fr. Parent states that we are to be “administrators of the grace of God in all its forms” – according to our unique personality, talents, and charisms.

Questions:

1. As Christ embraced all the stages of life, how might we be challenged to see Christ in different ways in people in different stages of life? The presence of God to us in our different stages?
2. Fr. Parent notes how Christ adapts and gathers all kinds of people. How might this help us to appreciate the call of Pope Francis for us to “go out and meet people” where they are at?

Prayer: Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be...