
Opening Prayer

PSALM 8

PSALM 8 -Divine Majesty and Human Dignity

A psalm of David.

O LORD, our Lord,

how awesome is your name through all the earth!

I will sing of your majesty above the heavens
with the mouths of babes and infants.

You have established a bulwark against your foes,
to silence enemy and avenger.

When I see your heavens, the work of your
fingers, the moon and stars that you set in
place—What is man that you are mindful of him,
and a son of man that you care for him?

Yet you have made him little less than a god,
crowned him with glory and honor.

You have given him rule over the works of your
hands, put all things at his feet:

All sheep and oxen, even the beasts of the field,
The birds of the air, the fish of the sea,
and whatever swims the paths of the seas.

O LORD, our Lord, how awesome is your name
through all the earth!

Teaching: Pages 23 to 30 continue Parent’s reflection on the “presence of God.” Specifically it gets into the topic of “Qualities of the Presence of God” which can sound a bit abstract and difficult. We might be tempted to skip this section of the chapter but it would be a loss to do so. He breaks this section up into three topics; quality of being, quality of presence and the quality of love. Let’s see if we can take these three sub-sections and make them a bit clearer and helpful as we reflect on the “Presence of God.”

The term “being” refers to simply stating what someone or something is. We are

humans and therefore have a human nature, a bird has a bird nature, a tree has a tree nature etc. A bird cannot act as a human and a human cannot, on his or her own, act like a bird. We cannot fly by our own power. As a human, however, we can think, we can reason, we can make free conscious choices, we can consciously love and we can consciously choose to do evil.

By the gift of God’s grace, which means a sharing in God’s very life, we can be made capable of making choices that lie beyond our natural abilities. We call these “supernatural” gifts or abilities such as Faith, Hope and Love. We can make choices that can bring us to eternal life with God by His grace. By baptism we are all made sharers in the priesthood of Jesus Christ and made God’s sons and daughters. By Confirmation we are given a deeper share in the life of the Holy Spirit empowering us to live out our Christian lives. An ordained priest is empowered to make present Christ’s Sacrifice.

Parent describes these gifts as “energies, capacities and dynamisms.” They provide an enthusiasm which can transform our lives by making us conscious of the presence of God within us. They make us realize that we “share in the divinity of Christ who humbles himself to share in our humanity” as the priest prays in the Mass. Our gifts and talents reflect the working of God in our lives and are meant to be shared with others allowing us to be instruments of God’s saving action through us.

By placing ourselves regularly in the presence of God, we realize all we have is from him as the image of the “vine and the

branches” found in John’s Gospel reminds us. Because we receive our “being” from him, we are dependent on him for our very existence every moment of our lives.

“Quality of love” reminds that God’s love for me is ever present. He is the faithful lover who will never abandon me, in good times and bad. He wants us to lean on him in every situation of our lives. Because God is our lover, he desires that we love him in return. God cannot benefit from anything we offer him. He is infinite fullness in himself. We are the ones who benefit when we chose to love God because he is God. It is like pouring water into an already full glass; the more we pour the more it spills back on us. We get soaked by God’s love. He wants to fill my being by all the beautiful qualities of his being. God never tires of giving himself to us.

“Qualities of Presence” reminds that God is always there ready to give himself to us. God will never force himself into our lives but he anxiously awaits the invitation. Like the image in the Book of Revelation Jesus stands knocking on the door. Humans can choose to keep the door shut, but he will never cease to knock in the depths of our conscience, in our deepest longings, in our joys and sorrows, in our relationships dreams and desires, he will continue to knock. When we invite him in, he will flood us with his most precious gifts. As Fr. Parent reminds, perhaps the best way to live this quality is by a life of total abandonment to God. Not easy, but in the end most liberating.

Reflection: This section of Parent’s discussion of God’s presence is perhaps the most initially difficult to appreciate

and yet the most powerful. It discusses how God’s Being touches our being. God’s Being is eternal. God has no beginning or end. As God said to Moses, “I Am Who Am.” Whatever else this might mean, it reminds that the nature of God is simply to exist. Yet God’s existence is ever infinitely dynamic. The Three Persons of the Trinity are forever pouring themselves out in an infinite love to one another and ultimately to us. God’s Being is not static; it is so dynamic as to infinitely bring about the Trinitarian relations; the Father generating the Son and the Father and the Son breathing forth the Holy Spirit.

This dynamism flows into our lives. As we receive being (existence) from God, the Trinity dwells within us through grace ever present and transforming our lives. The more we open ourselves to this reality the more God’s loving presence takes hold of our lives filling us with precious gifts for building up the Kingdom of God.

As Father Parent reminds, the quality of the “presence of God” is the foundation of the spirituality of our Institute. Without this we are building on sand.

Personal Application:

1. Do I consciously recall God's presence once each hour so as to live in God's presence?
2. Do I daily acknowledge that my very being is a constant gift from God and that I am totally dependent on him?
3. Do I thank God for the personal gifts God has given me and use them for God's glory and not mine?
4. Do I appreciate that I am infinitely loved by God even when I sin or fail?
5. Do I spend time each day in prayerful meditation listening to God in the depths of my heart?

Team Application:

1. Do we encourage one another to live out our spirituality "in the market place?"
2. Do we try to see the "presence of God" in each other, in our spouses, families, teams, parishes, workplaces and communities?
3. Do we see the "presence of God" in the poor or do we have little real contact with the poor?
4. Do we find God's presence in those whom we find difficult to love or even enemies?

Psalm 139:7-12 New International Version

- ⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
- ⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
- ⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.
- ¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"
¹² even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you

Closing Prayer: