

VDEI USA September 2015 Team Lesson

In The Footsteps of Jesus, Part 1

OPENING PRAYER

Good Gracious and Loving God.

I spend so much time reliving yesterday or anticipating tomorrow that I lose sight of the only time that is really mine, the present moment. You give today one moment at a time. That's all I have, all I will ever have. Give the faith which knows that each moment contains exactly what is best for me. Give the hope which trusts You enough to forget the past failings and future trials. Give the love which makes each moment an anticipation of eternity with You. We ask this in the name of Jesus Who is the same yesterday, today and forever.

Amen

INTRODUCTION

O Lord, you have searched me and you know me.
You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.
You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.
Before a word on my tongue you know it completely.
O LORD.
You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.
Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?
If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,
Even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.
If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,"
Even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.
For you created my inner most being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Your works are wonderful, I know that full well.
My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place.
When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,
Your eyes saw my unformed body.
All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still, Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you.

Psalm 139: 1-19

"This attraction cannot be described, it is felt, In the beginning, the soul maintains itself in the presence of God; by renewed efforts it acquires a certain facility. Then God brings the soul into a superior sphere and gives it the grace of a passive and infused presence, described marvelously well in Psalm 139...

In the work of sanctification, we cannot exclude God. Unfortunately, sin and my personal egoism ask God to leave. The soul that progresses feels the need to occupy himself/herself with God. God plays the leading role in this presence, but He wants it to be a cooperation of two beings who are made for one another, where the weaker one lets himself be invaded, absorbed and voluntary dominated by the stronger."

(Taken from the writings of Fr. Parent on Interior Life, Chapter 11, Number 3, April 1964)

The result of this response is stated so well by St Paul in the letter to the Galatians: *I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.* (Gal 2:20)

THE AWARENESS OF GOD'S PRESENCE CHANGES ME

The lives of members of secular institutes ought always to reflect God's Love for his children, Christ's mercy toward the poor, the lowly, sinners and the Holy Spirit's ardent call to unite us as one family. (Guidebook for the Professed)

I OBSERVE

The present moment is given to us to create marvels. A perfect today influences an unknown tomorrow and repairs yesterday's deficiencies. God so limited human beings that they control only the present moment. (*Present Moment*, Louis Marie Parent, Chapter 2)

I EVALUATE MY WAY OF LIVING

1. If I am caught in the past or if I am focusing on the future I will not be able to reflect God's love. The presence of God is a school for the formation of the heart.

Have I consciously focused on the present moment, calling on God's presence within me? What have been the results?

2. To live the present moment, intensely demands serious motivation and constant attention: we have to be aware of what is happening inside of us, to what we want to accomplish.

How often do we find ourselves forgetting what it is we want to accomplish and just reacting to what is happening around us?

3. What do you think will help you stay focused, remembering your commitment to live in the present moment?

I GO FURTHER IN MY COMMITMENT

As Voluntas Dei, I will focus on living in the present moment, being aware of what is happening within my spirit... what is pushing my buttons and commit to respond as Christ would. I will work to prevent reacting to things, aware that there is a purpose to my life... that I am committed to living the charism of the Institute:---
To be, in the manner of the Virgin of the Annunciation, the instrument of Christ carrying out the will of the Father, in the reality of the present moment, in the midst of the world wherever Christ has his rights. (Constitutions)

FURTHER DISCUSSION

The present moment is like an ambassador who declares the will of God. The heart must ever answer, "Let it be so." Then the soul will go steadily on by all means towards its target and goal – never pausing in its course, spreading its sails to all winds. All routes and methods advance it equally in its journey toward the great sea, the infinite. Everything becomes an instrument of sanctification. The soul always finds the "one thing needful" in the present moment....

...the one thing needful is simply what comes to the soul each moment by the will of God. This includes the stripping, the self-denial, the renunciation of earthly things, in order that the soul may be nothing in itself or live for itself, but may live wholly by God's will, and at

His good pleasure content itself with the duty of the present moment, as though that were the one thing in the whole world.

To hallow the name of God is, in the language of Scripture, to love Him, adore Him, and to recognize His holiness in all things. Things, like words, do indeed proceed from the mouth of God. The events of each moment are divine thoughts expressed by created objects. Thus, all those things by which He makes His will known to us are so many names, so many words by which He shows us His will. In itself, this will is one, singular; it bears but one unknown, ineffable name; but it is multiplied infinitely in its effects and takes on their names.

To hallow the name of God is to know, adore, and love the Ineffable One expressed by this name. It is also to know, adore and love His blessed will at all times, in all its effects, seeing all things as so many veils, shadows and names of this eternally holy will. It is holy in all its works, holy in all its words, holy in all its forms of manifestation, holy in all the names it bears.

...How insignificant is this precious moment in the eyes of the world, yet how great to the eye enlightened by faith! And can I call that little which is great in the eye of my Father who reigns in heaven? All that comes from there is most excellent. All that descends from there bears the imprint of its origin.

~ Father Jean-Pierre de Caussade –

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for Your great mercy and Your great love. A love that manifests itself in the reality of every moment. May we seize each moment as an opportunity to experience Your presence, to have by Your grace the eyes of our hearts opened so that we may see Your Will for us, that we may serve You to our fullest and bring you great glory. Help us not get caught up in the things of this world. Let us lay down our attachments, our egos, the things of this world which we cling to, and simply open our hearts to You so that they may be filled with Your light and love. May everything we do, every seemingly mundane task, be a living prayer to our great God. May our lives be an expression of our devotion and love for You. AMEN

*Lesson from Fr. Louise Marie Parent & Various Internet Sources