

May 2017 Lesson: *In Intimacy with Jesus: Absence of Criticism & Complaint*

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Opening Prayer Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit
within me.

Cast me not away from thy presence,
and take not thy holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of thy salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.

Then I will teach transgressors thy ways,
and sinners will return to thee.

Psalm 51

Living in the presence of God seems easy until we have to deal with others. And yet, as Fr. Parent wrote, “Everyone knows that the presence of God (is) protected by an absence of criticism,” and we can certainly add to this an absence of complaint. This absence enables us to live in the presence of God, and yet it is the presence of God that helps us live without criticism and complaint, freeing us to be of service to and peacemakers in our world. This is the mystery of seeking Him who has already found us.

Our habits of being, shaped over a lifetime, fortified by an intimacy with God through the 1st five help us respond to God’s call, help us to transform ourselves as children of God. The absence of criticism and complaint, then, are both the means to and outward signs of this transformation, this living in the presence of God.

Absence of Criticism

“Absence of criticism fortifies the presence of God, educates us to patience, augments the spiritual forces within us, permits us to welcome our neighbor with simplicity, stimulates our heart, weans our imagination, pacifies our passions, calms our emotions, suffocates our instincts for revenge, liberates us from selfishness and pettiness and preserves intimacy with God.” *In the Footsteps of Jesus*

Questions based upon *In Intimacy with Jesus*, pp 99-111

1. Have we adapted to love? Do we want to live in the manner of the Virgin?
2. Can the practice of humility help us avoid criticism and move out toward others in love and acceptance?
3. Can we respect others and criticize them at the same time?
4. Do we give others enough freedom that they can be respected even with their limits and their faults?
5. Does my ego get in the way of God’s grace when I judge others?

6. Do we trust God to forgive us each time we stumble? Are we open to keep receiving His call to be absent of criticism?

Absence of Complaint

“Absence of complaint manifests the spiritual maturity of a person, it expresses the basic quality of a personality which tends toward self-control. Absence of complaint indicates a beautiful personality, one who has taken charge of his life, who has a sense of responsibility. It demands that each of us makes a constant effort which we call asceticism.” *In the Footsteps of Jesus*

Questions based upon *In Intimacy with Jesus*, pp 112-116

1. How does complaining strain our relationship with God and prevent us from living in the present moment?
2. Can we see God’s part, a positive aspect, in the object of our complaint?
3. How can we use gratitude to replace complaint?
4. How does our complaining detract from our trusting that we are in God’s care?

Concluding Prayer

You are my servant.
You are my child.
I hold your heart in my hands.
Nothing can break it.
Live the present moment.
Keep watch over your quality of being.
Let me act in you.
Your confidence is the true expression of your love.
Amen.
-Fr. Parent