



Apostles for Today

Reflection and Prayer - May, 2007

Fundamental Rule 18 – Seek in Humility

“Our Lord Jesus Christ, lost, was found by Mary Most Holy, and by Joseph, in the Temple in the midst of the Doctors, listening to them, and asking them questions; that is, he was listening to those Doctors, and he asked them questions as if he were a fool, while all the time he is infinite Wisdom: therefore, for love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and for the greater sanctification of ourselves and of others, we must love to receive instructions and we should diligently seek them, and be avid to manifest our ignorance; and through this humble path God will grant us much wholesome intelligence.” (OO CC III, p. 47-8).

Reflection

Human beings are curious. We want to know. From the time we are small and able to pose questions, one of the first is ‘why’, often to the distraction and frustration of our parents. Later, the questions also include ‘how’, and sometimes even ‘who’. We look for answers to the way the world around us functions. How do the intricacies of nature, of God’s physical creation work? Why do all flowers have such unique scents? How do animals know to care for their young? How can we capture lightning energy?

We seek to understand the ins and outs of our relationships with others. Why are we attracted to some people more than to others? How do we act and react to the many people we meet? Who are we as human beings?

We explore the depths of the oceans and the realms of space, always seeking, always pushing the limits, always looking for more. Always yearning for more what? Simply more answers to the physical aspects of life? Or do we yearn, ever more profoundly, to know God? Is this not what we truly seek, often unbeknownst, even to ourselves?

We need answers for our life journey so that we, as individuals or a society, will not get lost on our way, but reach our destination. Living in the confines of time and space, we have to reach beyond the horizon for the eternal and the infinite to find the answers for the world of here and now.

On their journey back to Nazareth, Mary and Joseph are separated from Jesus and return to search for him. It is a situation familiar to many, or all, parents and children at some point in their lives.

How blessed are parents who will find their lost child in the Temple. How blessed are the sons/daughters who have been guided by and learned from their parents to go to the Temple to find the guiding answers.

When Jesus stays in the Temple, the house of his Father, he is not simply listening to discussions on the workings of nature. Rather he is listening to discussions of God's revelation as brought to the Jewish people through the prophets. These revelations were deeply cherished by the Jewish people and applied to their lives; these were not just fleeting thoughts to stimulate the mind. Jesus asked questions of the 'learned' which would address their/our deepest yearnings and clarify the relationship they/we have with the God who loves us. Already as a young man, Jesus' intimate relationship with the Father was visible. By being present, open and listening to God, Jesus had embraced the mission God laid out for him. Through his questions and astounding answers to their queries, he could awaken the doctors (and us) to the love of God present in their lives.

Jesus, as infinite Wisdom, showed us that we too must question, we must seek answers, so that we may come closer to, become aware of, and find God in our lives. This is the most important task we have as human beings, to seek God and to love him. Jesus would later say to a scribe that the greatest commandment is, "*Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! Therefore, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.*" (Mk. 12:30) "*Blessed are the poor*", those who know that they do not know everything but are open to listen and to learn, searching for the ultimate truth. And how do we accomplish this, if we do not listen and ask, and ask and listen?

Pallotti goes so far as to say that we must be humble and admit our ignorance of God. As the Son of God, Jesus was the infinite Wisdom; as a human being he too had to listen and ask and learn. So, we take our example from Him. We must strive to learn as much as we can about our heavenly Father, so that we may attain understanding which will be beneficial to the salvation of our souls and the souls of others.

The whole of God's salvific action depends on Jesus' coming to earth. In the Incarnation, God became one with humanity in Jesus, the Christ. He is God's incomprehensible love and mercy for us. Through his life, death,

resurrection and ascension, Jesus opens the door to God's love for us and clarifies our destiny and our destination.

But salvation also depends on the ability of His people to 'hear'. We have an active role. We must be open, appreciative, willing to receive and respond to the greatest gift so generously given: God's merciful, infinite love to be experienced forever. Mary is the first model of such openness. Her 'yes' to God's call could only be made because she was prepared and willing to receive the Saviour into her heart and into her womb. She readily gave her heart and self to God to be used in any way he saw fit.

St. Therese of Lisieux, in her little way to find God, also tells us that we must be focused on God, practice humility and love Him who has loved us first. In a letter to Sister Agnes of Jesus in 1889, Therese writes:

"If you knew how great is my wish to be indifferent to the things of this world! What matter all created beauties to me? Possessing them, I should be utterly unhappy, my heart would be so empty!... It's incredible how big a thing my heart seems when I consider the world's treasures,, since all of them massed together could not content it...but how small a thing it seems when I consider Jesus! I want to love Him so!...To love Him more than He has ever been loved! – My sole desire is to do the will of Jesus always..."

Like St. Vincent, St. Therese gained great spiritual inspiration from The Imitation of Christ. We too can pray with the saints:

"O Lord, grant me heavenly wisdom, so that I may learn above all things to seek You and to find You, above all things to delight in You and love You; and to value everything else according to its place in Your wise plan. (The Imitation of Christ, Book 3, XXVII)

Pope Benedict wrote:

"The way to the right kind of life runs: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself' (Luke 10:27). The first thing should thus be that God is present in our life. The sums of human life don't work out if God is left out: all that remains then is nothing but contradiction. So we mustn't just believe in some theoretical way that God exists: we must consider him to be the most important and real thing in our life. As Scripture says, he must penetrate every layer of our life and fill it completely: our heart must know about him and let itself be moved by him; our

soul; the power of our will and decision; our intelligence. He must be everywhere. And our fundamental attitude towards him, our fundamental relationship to him, must be called love.” (Card. J. Ratzinger, “The Yes of Jesus Christ.” 1989)

We pray with St. Vincent

“Seek God and you will find him. Seek him in all things and you will find him in all things. Seek him always and you will find him always.” (St. Vincent to Brother Benedict, Camaldolensian, 22 July 1836, letter 382. Ed. Hettenkofer, 1930)

“Lord, you resist the proud but are merciful to the humble. Give us true humility, after the example of your only Son. Deliver us from pride so that we may never know your silence; give us the gift of true humility, the virtue which obtains for us your grace. We ask our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.” (UAC Community Prayers, Tuesday Evening prayer, Weekly Cycle)

Scripture Meditations

Psalm 37:7 - Be quiet

Psalm 46:10 Be still and know

Psalm 63:1 - You are my God

Isaiah 55:6 - Seek the Lord

Proverbs 15:33 - Humility

Jeremiah 7:23 - Listen to my voice

Matthew 7:7-8 - Ask

1Peter 5:5 - The humble

Questions for Reflection

- 1) Do I actively seek to know God better?
- 2) Am I open to God’s love in my life? Am I present to God?
- 3) Is God number one in my life?

A Final Prayer

“O Father, give us the humility which
Realizes its ignorance, admits its mistakes,
Recognizes its need, welcomes advice, accepts rebuke.
Help us always to praise rather than to criticize,
To sympathize rather than to condemn,
To encourage rather than to discourage,
To build rather than to destroy,
And to think of people at their best rather than at their worst.
This we ask for thy name’s sake. Amen.”

William Barclay 1907-78