

Along the track

Meeting God

At the beginning of a retreat many years ago, the facilitator began by telling us to 'meet God where God wants to meet you.' It was, I suppose, another way of asking us to keep in mind that: The desire for God is written in the human heart, because each person is created by God and for God: and God never ceases to draw each person to himself.

Catechism #27

There may have been set times for prayer, meditation, worship but, we were reminded, God contacts us in God's good time, not necessarily ours. The starting point in this relationship is not the head, but the heart, finding ways to make contact with the One who loves us more than anyone can. I wonder how we might be drawn towards God today or will we miss that invitation?

I can't remember where I found this story, but I kept it and I sometimes read it again. And again.

The crowd gathered around the old woman. Someone in the back asked: to what would you compare the Kingdom of God? For a long time there was silence.

Then the woman said:

The kingdom of God is like a sound. It is the most natural sound in the world. Its melody plays through the hollow places in trees and mountains and people's hearts.

Jesus would hear his sound approaching. 'Listen', he would say, 'the kingdom of God is at hand'.

He heard that sound playing in children, among the outcasts, when friends gathered to share a meal.

Jesus kept moving until he reached a place where he could find its rhythm and then he would sit down and listen.

The kingdom of God is like a sound. It is the most delicate melody in the world. External noises drown it out; internal rumblings mask it.

We hear it for a moment or a day, but then it is gone. No one of us can produce this mysterious sound on our own. But we can hunt it down in places where it plays. When we find this sound, we have but to hum along.

After the woman finished speaking, the crowd remained silent for a long time. Listening.

Prayer is really about attuning ourselves to the presence of God, becoming more sensitive to where God may be in our lives at this time, more sensitive to what God may be trying to say to us. Meeting God is much more than just saying prayers, however helpful that may be, but they are not an end in themselves but rather vehicles by which we may become more sensitive to the presence of God, to the sound the old lady spoke about, sound which can be the most natural sound in the world. It can be the sounds in nature, the sounds of others around us, the joy of children, the off-hand remark... all sorts of things. But, if we are open to it, God speaks to us in ways we can understand and at times when we are ready, when we give ourselves the time and the space to listen, to be open to hear what God wants to say to us.

John reminded us that God first loves us but that can sometimes still be hard to grasp that God is present to us first, that God longs to communicate with us. We don't think we are worthy, or that God couldn't possibly love me and so on.

Way back in Pope John Paul's day we find the expression that: 'Properly understood, authentic spirituality is not so much about our search for God but God's search for us'. Water of Life #3.3

The scriptures are full of stories and events where God goes in search of us. In the words of the Catechism, By his revelation, the invisible God, from the fullness of his love, addresses us as friends, and moves among us, in order to invite us into his own company. #142

Jesus told us about the treasure in the field, the pearl of great price, the father who scans the horizon for his son every day but are they just stories but something we take to heart? God is moving among us, close to us, inviting us into friendship but it takes two to make that happen. Pope Francis put it this way:

"God is a God who goes out, He goes out to search, for each one of us. But is this true? Every day He searches, he is searching for us. As he already has done and already said, in the Parable of the lost sheep or the lost coin: He is searching. He is always doing this."

Regards

Jim Quillinan

Email: jquillinan@dcsi.net.au