

Contemplative Prayer

2nd August 2022

“Be still and know that I am God”

Psalm 46 v. 10

What do we see and hear? Selfish, unkind thoughtless acts that lack self control. Too much noise, anger, violence and sin.

What we want to hear and see is selflessness, concern, patience, imagination, generosity, community, connection, stillness, hope and silence.

We live amongst change, disruption and chaos and long for peace. We are human we say, and desire freedom from daily concerns and challenges. We long for inner peace. In our lives where shortages of love, spirituality and humility abound, the temptation can be to seek escape from the disruption and difficulties, for the easy complacency of familiarity and routine.

Too often following the distraction of a well earned break, brings us back, slipping into a routine where there seems little space for seeking stillness and silence. Escape can become routine and we edge away from confronting our need.

In seeking prayer – contemplative prayer, the *Anonymous* writer of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, explains that we are approaching ‘the work of the soul that most pleases God’

“The Lord takes pleasure in those who hope in His steadfast love”
Ps.147 v11

However, experience shows that hesitation often occurs, accompanied by the dread of the revelation of self examination and the anxiety of coming closer to God. We are not fully understanding who God is, or what His presence may mean for us.

There is a line by William Blake: “we are put on this earth for a little space that we may learn to bear the beams of love”

How do we prepare to ‘bear the beams of love’?

‘If prayer means to change, it is no wonder that men, even devoted men, hurry to protective clothing’!

D. Steere.

“God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in time of trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth could change”

Ps 46 v 1-2

Thomas Merton brings us these words: ‘the hour of the silent offering: therefore the hour of hope: God alone, faceless, unknown, unfelt, yet undeniably God.

He goes on to say: 'We should let ourselves be brought, naked and defenceless, into the centre of that dread, alone before God...in dire need of the gift of his grace'.....'True contemplation is not a psychological trick but a theological grace'

Anonymous, warns: 'Be careful, don't approach contemplation with your intellect or your imagination'

The practice of praying contemplatively, requires us to be still and to persist, developing a discipline in which we can simply reach out. Reach out with love. In entering this delight we can experience increased desire to continue.

'May those who sow with tears reap with shouts of joy' Ps.126 v5

'The Lord will bless you from Zion' Ps.128 v5

We are all beginners and will always be!

Anonymous says: 'Stop hesitating. Do this work until you feel the delight of it.'
'Feel a simple reaching out for God' ' Stay there as long as you can, because you love Him.'

'When you call upon me and come and pray with me, I will hear you.'

Jeremiah 29 v12