

Heart to Heart: Session 3 Transcript

Welcome back everybody. I'm Archbishop Christopher Prowse from the Archdiocese of Canberra Goulburn. And this is our third session of Heart-to-Heart eSeminar. So you would recall the first session was introductory. The second session was about the beginning of our inner pilgrimage and what we would need externally. Today in our pilgrimage we look at what attitudes and or foundational thoughts we have deep within us for the inner Journey. So dear friends as we still are in the COVID-19 restrictions of going outside. There's no restriction on us going inside. So let's be courageous and let the Holy Spirit now take us on to the journey deep within us with the Lord Jesus leading us the way the truth and the life when we go on the inner journey. There's always the yearning the thirsting the hunger.

It's where we start we start with the inner yearning and there's no better some that speaks of this and I'll use this for our opening prayer then the wonderful some Psalm 63 in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Oh God, you are my God.

Earnestly I Seek You.

My soul thirsts for you my body Longs for you.

Like a dry weary land where there is no water.

But I have seen you in the sanctuary and behold your power and your glory.

I think of you through the watches of the night because you are my help.

My soul clings to you.

Your right hand holds me.

We make this and all our prayer through Christ the Lord. Amen

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Oh! Well, that's wonderful. My soul clings to you. Your right hand upholds me. So it is the Lord who leads us we're not on our own. In fact to lead the spiritual life on your own is disastrous because that's the spiritual world what other spirits but it's the Holy Spirit leading us. That is the key point of that beautiful psalm.

So over these introductory comments now as we talk about the journey inward we focus on the early centuries of the church course, we have the Gospels. We have Jesus then we have a particularly Saint John and Saint Paul who talked about their inner journey - the journey Back to the Father the journey with the Holy Spirit and then all over the first couple of centuries of the church.

With his great persecution, there's a beginning of the monastic tradition and we have in the early centuries from people like John Cassian, one of the early desert fathers. Desert fathers and mothers in the early centuries of the church start to articulate the inward journey and John Cassian, he wrote down a lot of his retreats. I suppose retreat notes from his conferences and they have been kept.

Over the centuries they were particularly influential on Saint Benedict in the 5th 6th century when he began the Western monasticism or the Western wave of mysticism and his Great rule the rule of Saint Benedict, which is a Christian Classic by the way, all these books that I bring up you don't need to worry too much about them will make sure that we take pictures of them and they'll be put on the website. So just relax

But here in the this simple 5th 6th Century a document he begins by saying to listen with the ear of the heart. Listen with the ear of the heart as we begin the inward Journey Let's take it from one of the great Saints of the early church on mysticism on monasticism and the Western World at least listening with the ear of the heart. So I'd like to begin with a lovely quote.

From St. Teresa of Avila in the Middle Ages now the great Carmelite Mystic the Spanish Carmelite nun. She says deep prayer, the deep inward journey is a close sharing between friends. It means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us. To be alone with him who we know loves us. In a journey with the Lord and loves us.

And over these early centuries, which have now come to us still the many things that could be said in the few minutes I have with you. I'm just going to pick out three words which to me a big summary words of what has been passed on to us from the early church through the monasticism and through now, we could say hundreds of things, but I'm just going to pick up three simple words and they all begin with S. So the first word

on the inner Journey foundational work is the love and appreciation of the first test silence?

Silence

There are different types of Silence

I mean you can have the external silence which you turn off the TV or turn off the radio you turn off the iPad all the rest of it and you can have external silence.

But there is a deeper silences. There's an inner silence when you begin to pray and you turn off all the music and have external quietness. You can find that there's so much noise this dictatorship of noise coming from within you not from about and you and I would call them distractions one thing that in regard to coming to an inner silence that the church has taught us is the importance of repetitive prayer like we have the rosary that's repetitive prayer, but even to cut it right down just to a couple of words. We have the Jesus prayer that's come down through the centuries *Jesus Son of David have mercy on me a sinner* you repeat that and it will help you to focus on Jesus rather than the distractions Jesus Son of David have mercy on me a sinner. It's called the Jesus prayer and even coming out of one word. Beautiful word, Maranatha - four syllables. mayor and nothing come Lord Jesus. That's been retrieved to gain through wonderful new renewals of Christian meditation in our times throughout the world wide Christian meditation movement of John Maine, Lawrence Freeman and all the rest. They can help us to retrieve these wonderful treasures and coming into that inner silence.

Now once we try to move in that direction we find there's just a delight to be silent before the Lord. A contemporary of St. Teresa of Avila in the Middle, also a Carmelite Spanish St John of the Cross. They know each other and helped each other on the spiritual journey.

He coined a beautiful expression which I really love when I start to pray he calls it silent love.

What a wonderful definition of meditation contemplation, 'silent love'. Another Saint around that same time. He called it silence as a symbol of the world to come.

A symbol of the world to come and what does he mean, you know when we when we go to God in heaven and presumably, you know, the language of God is silence. I mean God knows all the languages English and all the languages of the world, but God's mother tongue, I like to call it God's mother tongue is silence. And learning to contemplate and to go deep within is learning the language of God and being comfortable in silent love.

Actually a friend of mine. She's great on jumbling up words. She said silent jumbled that word up you get another word using the same letters and you get our LIST EN - listen.

Really thankful for that. Wonderful. It's a it's a it's a cute little expression but it's love is so what does silent means it means to listen to the word itself suggested by the letters listing with the ear of the heart silence symbol of the world to come the second word now.

Stillness

The second word is the word Stillness.

Stillness this is come down over the centuries not to fidget not to be moving around just sit down or whatever or just be still. It's a bit like Moses in front of the burning bush in Exodus chapter 3 verse 2.

There is Moses he comes along and he finds the following there in front of him appeared in flames of fire from within a bush.

Moses saw that though the Bush was on fire. It did not burn up. It did not burn up.

That's been he was still before this there. We have the the bush that was on fire, but not consumed.

I find over the years that my Aboriginal friends have taught me a lot about what silence really means and one of my friends from Australia from Daily River. She's written the preface to this rather big book *Our Mob God's Story*.

And it's Aboriginal religious that and there is my friend Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr on the preface of this big book. She has this to say about Stillness.

Our Aboriginal culture has taught us to be still and to wait.

We do not try to hurry things up.

We let them follow their natural course like the seasons.

We watched the moon in each of its phases. We wait for the rain to fill our rivers and water. They were thirsty earth when Twilight comes we prepare for the night at dawn We rise with the Sun.

And we wait for God to His time is the right time. We wait for him in Stillness to make his word clear to us. We don't worry. We know that in time and in the spirit of deery, which means that deep listening and quiet Stillness his way will be made clear.

There are Deep Springs within each of us.

The very spirit of God is a sound the sound of deep calling too deep. The sound is the word of God. The sound is Jesus.

They is the wow moment. This is a fantastic everybody that although on one level I'm giving you the inside some of the insides of some of the mystical tradition going back to the early centuries our ancient Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders people going back thousands and thousands of years are able to articulate somewhat similar expressions this to me is a great opportunity for us through meditation and contemplation silence and Stillness to come closer to our first Australians through the mystical tradition we both share. So there we have that one. Now.

Simplicity

The third one is the third word is Simplicity in prayer, but sometimes children pray a lot better than us. I mean one of the one of the great definitions of deep prayerful science comes from John Vianney the patron the French Parish priest who was seen to be a

peasant in the use that word quite deliberately in the eighteenth, nineteenth century, the patron saint of all priests. He's definition of prayer is simply this

I look at him. He looks at me.

I look at him. He looks at me.

There is deep in a prayer. There's deep inner simplicity. I've come across a saint on the way who also hearing when I read his spiritual writings. It reminds me of John Vianney and he's on the way to becoming a saint In fact, I was able to meet him some years ago when I was studied in Rome, he he was the former Archbishop of Saigon in Vietnam. He was imprisoned by the Communists there for many many years for 13 years. Nine of them in solitary confinement and he wrote allotted in in prison about prayer and when he was finally released he started to write and give retreats in Rome. That's where I met him. He's close to us in Australia because his mum lived in Sydney for many years. He said with his sister. He's another sister lived up until recently here in Canberra, and she's gone to God too so but the family is there.

He saw himself as a bit of an Australian when I was talking to him because he's when his mum lived in Australia the children become part of Australia. Anyway, he's written this beautiful little book called Five Loaves and Two Fish. The name is Cardinal Cardinal Nguyen van Thuan. You may or may not have heard of him. But I tell you what when you read his thoughts on prayer and simplicity you understand what I'm talking about. Here is a little story that he writes about prayer.

There was an older man named Jim. Who would go to church every day at noon for just a few minutes and then he would leave. The sacristan was very curious about Jim's daily routine and one day he stopped him to ask why do you come here every day? I come to pray, Jim answered. Oh but that's impossible. What prayer can you be saying in just two minutes? Oh, I'm an old ignorant man. I pray to God in my own way. Hey, but what do you say? Oh, I just say Jesus here I am, it's Jim.

Then I'll leave.

After some years Jim became ill and had to go to the hospital where he was admitted to the ward for the poor when it seemed that Jim was dying a priest and a nurse a religious sister stood near his bed. The Priest asked Jim tell us how it is how it is that from the very first day you came into this hospital everything changed for the better. How is it that the patients have become happier more content and friendlier.

I don't know. said Jim. When I could walk around I would try to visit everyone. I greeted them talked a bit with them and when I couldn't get out of bed, I called everyone over to me to make them laugh and to keep them happy said Jim. They always are happy.

But why are you so happy? Oh, well, aren't you happy when you receive a visit every day? Ask Jim?

Of course, but Jim, we've never seen you ever receive a visitor.

Well when I came here as for two chairs one was for you and one was reserved for my guest. But what guest asked the priest. I used to go to church to visit Jesus every day at noon, but when I couldn't do that anymore, Jesus came here.

Jesus comes to visit you. What does he say? Oh, nothing much. He just says Jim here I am, it's Jesus.

Before dying Jim's mild and gestured with his hand towards the chair next to his bed as if inviting someone to sit down. He smiled for the last time and closed his eyes. Wow, Jim.

Jim's prayer, there's nobody here participating right now can say Bishop I don't know how to pray. I've just given you the most beautiful prayer you could pray.

Jesus here I am and you say your name?

Jesus here I am. It's Chris. It's Christopher. That's what sometimes I say and listen carefully to Jesus say back to you Christopher here I am it's Jesus. That is deep prayer and we can all pray like that with simplicity. So there's the 3 s's everybody.

Silence, Stillness, simplicity