

Replacement Homily 19th Sunday Year A - 2023

This week we are reminded that the elements of creation can teach us much about God. We hear about fire and earthquakes, winds and breezes, seas and storms. Creation itself speaks of the wonder, wisdom and creativity of God. Yet its captivating beauty is but a pale reflection of its creator.

Macrina Wiederkehr believed that beauty calls us to attention. It slows us down and helps lead us into contemplation. It is difficult to hurry through beauty. Thomas Merton once said, "Hurry ruins saints as well as poets and artists." If you are in a hurry, you probably won't stop to be present to "the beautiful."

Beauty has the ability to heal life's wounds. It can make us receptive to grace. People dealing with issues of grief, pain, and darkness can often find healing through reflective exercises on beauty. It can lead us into finding a mystical place that only beauty can help us discover. This can be done by listening to music, going to an art museum, or watching a nature video.

As we pray in that mystical place, we can become a prayer ourselves and gradually discover that prayers and poems are all around us. We discover that life itself is one great poem and one great prayer. Creation has a determination to lead us to God like the gentle breeze Elijah experienced or, as happened at Pentecost, the Spirit came as wind and fire. Whether the wind be a gentle breeze or a great storm, it always moves things. By allowing God to enter our lives, we will be moved and transformed. The wind of the Spirit will blow us right out of our ruts.

In order to enter into the experience of the beauty of creation, however, we need silence in order to truly encounter God's presence. For silence is a positive, energy-filled experience not an absence or an empty nothingness. The following reflection can help us appreciate better the reality of the silence of God.

*Silence sounds like the space between night and day,
the glance of love that needs no words,
the full moon rising over the lake,
the morning dew on the quiet grass,
the first rays of the new day's sunlight,
a mystery too deep for words.*

Just as we cannot fully grasp silence, however real, we have learnt to welcome God as mystery. In wanting to allow God to take control of our lives, we sense that God's presence is never fully fathomable. We are always in a process of searching out new meanings, knowing that God is both the answer and the unanswer. God is a divine riddle. In knowing that God is both transcendent and immanent, we are held in the midst of the sacred tension between them. Yet, God is that mystery towards which we lean. We are always reaching for the divine but never fully satisfied. However, if we experience God only as transcendent, we can become discouraged. God is too far away, too distant. On the other hand, an immanent God is as close as one's own heartbeat. This imminent God is tangible and intimate but knowing only an immanent God risks the relationship with God becoming trite or sentimental. It is only in the sacred tension between the two that we are able to create a healthy relationship with God. Eventually, we come to realise that in this sacred tension the imminence and transcendence of God are two sides of the same coin!

A tourist driving across rural England decided to stay the night in a small town.

The only place with rooms available was a quaint English pub, The **George and Dragon**, which had a painted sign of a Knight beside a defeated dragon, blowing in the evening breeze.

Entering the bar, which had a roaring fire, leather padded booths and a mahogany bar with polished brass rails, he went to the bar and asked for a room.

The bar maid said "Rooms cost £20 per night, we don't accept euros, and you must be out by 7am tomorrow, or else you pay for both days."

"Alright then, could I get something to eat?"

Bar Maid "Kitchen closed at 6, and I am not going back there until 11am tomorrow, no matter what you say. Anything else?"

"Yes, **could I please talk to George?**"