

James Finley:

I was very pleased to accept the invitation to share the meditations on good news for a fractured world. And I want to be basing my reflections on the thought of the Catholic theologian, Bernard Lonergan. And I want to walk through that as giving us a format, segueing into Richard Rohr and see where this goes, see if you find it helpful.

Bernard Lonergan suggests that our spirituality, or really our faith in Christ, begins in an interior stance of what he calls emergence. And emergence is a desire to follow Christ by being ever more Christlike, how can I be more patient, more merciful, more kind, more creative, more caring, more engaged and so on. And when I stumble and fall, which I do because I'm just a human being, I get up again and knowing that God is infinitely in love with me in the midst of my frailties and I walk on. And in that sensitivity, I try to help other people do the same. I try to walk with them in a way that encourages them to follow this path that is given to them to do so.

And in this path then, it's so important to know that we experience God's presence to us revealed in Jesus, veiled in the powers of the soul. In the higher powers of the soul, the intellect, the memory, and the will, it's veiled so that when we hear God loves us, we know through the power of the spirit that stirs in our hearts, we experientially know that God does love us veiled through the knowledge and understanding. In memory, it's veiled in our gratitude of how mysteriously we are awakened by God to the presence of God in our life. They're on this path this way, being led by God right up to this very present moment. And in the will, which is the desire for God which is placed in us by God as an echo of God's desire for us. And it's also in the emotions, in consolations, in the felt sense of God's presence that sustains us with the patterns of our days. There's that.

And we know how important it is then to be faithful to a daily rendezvous in prayer because the intensity of the days' of demands can eclipse the subtlety of this presence of Christ in us and living our life. And so in our prayer, we set aside a time. And Thomas Murton suggests that when we go to our daily rendezvous with God, the guidelines are to be sincere. Because with God, a little sincerity goes a long, long way. To know that with God to understand is to realize that we're infinitely understood is to understand. And to know that it's in our sincerity and in our humility that we then turn to prayer. And when we turn to prayer, a spiritual reading, *Lectio Divina*, in devotional sincerity, we open the scriptures this way. And all the scriptures really, all of the Torah, the prophets and so on, but especially here in the words of Jesus.

And so we open the text as God's word. And Richard Rohr says this, I want to quote Richard Rohr. He's talking about these texts, these sacred texts, "They're not about the life of Jesus then. They're about life with Jesus now. If in reading the gospels, we do not hear Jesus speaking to our contemporary situation. We are missing their meaning." When Jesus says, "Fear not, I'm with you always." We're to know in faith that the infinite love of God embodied in Jesus is personally talking to us and telling us not to be afraid this way. And so *Lectio Divina* then stands for receptive openness to the presence of Jesus, one with the presence of ourself as God's beloved this way.

And then in meditation, reflective meditation in this sense is that in a sense God says, "I talk to you, you talk to me where you at." And this is where we personalize it. Where am I at with this? We might journal it out, reflect upon it. And in prayer, a prayer is from the heart, "Help me with this. I cannot deepen my awareness of your infinite oneness with me unless you deepen it." Devotional sincerity. And at the end of this setting, we ask God for the grace not to break the thread of that as we go through the day. As we go through the day, it breaks many times, really, just driving to work, whatever. But what happens is we know it never breaks from God's end and we live by that.

Now, what happens in this journey is from time to... We know that we live by faith, the measure of faith is love, and we live by hope that when we die, we're not annihilated but consummated. We'll move from

veiled awareness of God, efficacious unto holiness, to unveiled in glory forever. What happens from time to time, and these are taste of mystical touching, is that God decides not to wait until we're dead to give us unveiled union. Sometimes these moments can be very intense, actually, but often they're very delicate like a whisper. And in some subtle way, we and God mutually disappear as dualistically other than each other and we rest in the oneness. And it illumines all of it. It's like experiential knowledge of what faith proclaims and living the life.

But what happens with some people is the desire to abide there. There is this intuition that these moments of oneness with God, it isn't something more is given but a curtain part in God's infinite oneness with us that is the reality of every moment of our life is an unveiling. What happens with some people is the desire to abide there, which is path talk. And so the wisdom I think too in the living school, at the very heart of it is reading the mystics, the Christian mystics. And the podcast I do with Curson is reading the mystics. Why? Because the mystics are trying to help us discern this desire. And what is the path with God's grace that I could be healed from and hinders me from being habitually stabilized in it this way? It's the path.

And in a way, this path is beyond this world in a way because it's celestial. But if it's authentic, it radicalizes our oneness with the world because that's Jesus. It radicalizes the holiness of every person that we see. It radicalizes the divinity of standing up and sitting down this way. And Teresa of Avila in her book, *The Interior Castle*, she said at the very end, "For those so blessed and being stabilized in this divine union, there's only one question that's left. How can I be helpful this way?" That's the path this way. And I think this is good news for a fractured world. But to realize the fractured world is us. We're the fractured world, that each one of us. And the fractured places deeply accepted is experiential salvation because it's the portal through which God being infinitely in love with us in the midst of our brokenness is the divinity of ourselves is ordinary.

I'd like to end then with a short little quote in which we move from this emergence into this realizing God's oneness with us with learning and calls it mediation, which is the actual presence of God reigning down into our ordinariness this way and we live by that. This is a lovely little book by the Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner, *Prayers For A Lifetime*. And in the front of the book is a little piece, I'm going to read it. "It is both terrible and comforting to dwell in the inconceivable nearness of God and to be so loved by God himself that the first and the last gift is infinity and inconceivability itself. But we have no choice. God is with us. And that's good news for a fractured world that is.

Blessings to all of you. Peace.