

## Seeking God Within

It seems to me, in this present age, God is leading us beyond the concept of 'Him' or 'Her', beyond gender, and certainly beyond God being "out there". Has the time come that our Lord spoke of when he said:

"God is Spirit and those who worship shall worship in spirit and in truth"

John 4:24

From an early age, if we have been brought up as Christians, we have learnt to ask God for things - God bless Mummy and Daddy - we learnt to think of God as "out there". Even saying the Lord's prayer is talking to God "out there". This is the beginning of a relationship with God, but at some stage we begin to realise that prayer like any other relationship, is a two-way thing, and if a relationship is to come to any depth, one must open one's inner self (the heart) to the other. Perhaps people today find it hard to relate to God because they do not even know how to relate to their own deepest selves. Who am I? We are not our bodies. If I have all my limbs amputated it does not alter who I am. A blood transfusion does not change me. Even a heart transplant does not alter who I am. My soul or spirit is beyond the physical.

How can we reach this inner self? By making time to cultivate an inner silence – but how can we cultivate that? Richard Rohr OFM speaks of going into the silence by speaking, breathing the name of God, Yahweh. The correct pronunciation of the Hebrew word *Yahweh* is an attempt to replicate and imitate the very sound of inhalation. He says notice what happens when you gently breathe in for *Yah* and out for *weh* a few times. It brings a sense of peace. Alternatively, you may prefer the specifically Christian name of Jésus – pronounced with a soft J sounding like the letter Y.

Andre Louf says that in trying to reach this inner silence:

“some people turn to their imagination but there is considerable risk of ending up distracted and full of day-dreams. Others may try through their religious feelings but soon get bogged down in sentimentality. Yet others resort more to their intellect and try to arrive at clear insights; but their prayer remains arid and cold and eventually ends up outside the sphere of concrete living. Imagination, feeling and intellect are not of the Evil One but they can only bear fruit when, much deeper within us, our hearts come to awakening and they, fed by the flame of this spiritual fire, themselves begin to glow.”

How can we know when we have experienced this awakening and that the deep peace that we feel at the centre of our being is not just imagination or wishful thinking? I put it like this. The Presence of God, the Energy of God, is like Dark Matter which is called ‘dark because it cannot be seen. Indeed its existence hasn’t been proved, though scientists have spent literally millions on trying to identify it. Scientists know that dark matter exists because of the effect it has on other sub-atomic particles in the makeup of matter. In the same way, we know we have been in the presence of God when we have been in this mysterious, unidentifiable silence by the effect it has on us. It does not just affect our set times of prayer but permeates our whole life. Because it is God working in us it expands our vision of life, our attitudes, our prejudices and judgements. All this, if we can but keep our hearts and minds open to the Spirit breathing within us.

You may ask: What about intercession, isn’t it asking God for things? In one of our guest rooms we have a print of the icon “Our Lady of Intercession”. Mary is holding a scroll open and pointing to the passage in St John’s Gospel which recounts the Wedding at Cana. She is pointing to the words *they have no wine* – just that. She is not telling Jesus how this came about or how ashamed the host will be. She just connects Jesus with the disaster through her own concern. In intercession we, the intercessors, need to know something of the

circumstances to kindle our concern. God already knows it all, but it seems in the mystery of humanity where God has given us free will, he will not bypass this and treat us like robots. Our love and concern seem to open the way for God's energy to flow into the world.

Eckhart said:

“Every act reveals God and expands God's being.”

We can think of intercession as expanding God's being in every situation we open to Him.

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