

Daily Spiritual Practice: Week of Nov 5th

DAY I: MORNING/MIDDAY OFFICE

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: Luke 9:49 - 55

Master, said John, "we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us." "Do not stop him, Jesus said, "for whoever is not against you is for you," As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" But Jesus turned and rebuked them.

Devotional

We often forget that the people Jesus chose to form the leadership of his church were neither spiritually nor emotionally mature. Like us, they had a great deal to learn. Peter, the point leader, had a big problem with his mouth and was a bundle of contradictions. Andrew, his brother, was quiet and remained behind the scenes. James and John were called "sons of thunder" because they were aggressive, hotheaded, ambitious, and intolerant. Philip was skeptical and negative. He had limited vision. "We can't do that, summed up his lack of faith when confronted by the problem of feeding the five thousand. Nathanael Bartholomew was prejudiced and opinionated. Matthew was the most hated person in Capernaum, working in a profession that abused innocent people. Thomas was melancholy, mildly depressive, and pessimistic. James, son of Alphaeus, and Judas, son of James, were nobodies. The Bible says nothing about them. Simon the Zealot was a freedom fighter and a terrorist in his day. Judas, the treasurer, was a thief and a loner. He pretended to be loyal to Jesus and then betrayed him. Most of them, however, did have one great quality. They were willing. That is all God asks of us.

Question to Consider

What is one step you can take to place yourself (with all your flaws) in the hands of Jesus, inviting him to mold you into a spiritually and emotionally mature disciple?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, I can relate to the disciples who wanted to call down fire from heaven on the Samaritans and who fought over which of them was the greatest. Forgive my arrogance. Cleanse me and fill me with your power so that I might love well today for your name's sake. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

DAY 1: MIDDAY/EVENING OFFICE

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: Mark 5:30 - 34

At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?" "You see the people crowding against you, his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'" But Jesus kept toons " who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and felt at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering"

Devotional

As emotionally mature Christian adults, we recognize that loving well is the essence of true spirituality. This requires that we experience connection with God, with ourselves, and with other people. God invites us to practice his presence in our daily lives. At the same time, he invites us to "practice the presence of people" within an awareness of his presence, in our daily relationships. Sadly, the two are rarely brought together. Jesus' profound, contemplative prayer life with his Father resulted in a contemplative presence with people. He saw every person he met as someone new who never existed before, something original and unique. We see this in his interaction with the woman suffering from a twelve-year bleeding problem (Mark 5). This ability to really listen and pay attention to people was at the very heart of Jesus' mission, and it could not help but move him to compassion. In the same way, out of our contemplative time with God, we too are invited to be prayerfully present to people, revealing their beauty to them. Unfortunately, the religious leaders of Jesus' day, the "church leaders" of that time, never made that connection.

Question to Consider

How can you "practice the presence of people" within an awareness of God's presence today?

Prayer

Lord, I have unhealthy ways of relating to others that are deeply imbedded in me. Please change me. Make me a vessel to spread mature, steady, and reliable love so that those I come in contact with will sense your tenderness and kindness through me. In Jesus name, amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

DAY 2: MORNING/MIDDAY OFFICE

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: Luke 15:20b - 24

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. "The son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found! So they began to celebrate."

#### Devotional

In the famous parable of the prodigal son, Jesus' description of the father gives us a glimpse of what it looks like for us to be emotionally mature adults. The church is full of "younger sons" who wander from the love of God every time he does not meet their expectations. It is also full of "elder brothers" who are angry, bitter, and grumpy. I know them both well. I relate to both. Yet people are desperately looking for fathers and mothers in the faith who are able to embrace, love, empathize, be present, and forgive freely. It is a love without conditions, something the world knows very little about. To become this kind of person does not come naturally. As Henri Nouwen has written: I have to kneel before the Father, put my ear against his chest and listen, without interruption, to the heartbeat of God. Then, and only then, can I say carefully and very gently what I hear. I know now that I have to speak from eternity into time, from the lasting joy into the passing realities of our short existence in this world, from the house of love into the houses of fear, from God's abode into the dwellings of human beings. Question to Consider Which words from Nouwen's quotation about the prodigal son speak to you?

#### Prayer

Father, help me to be still and listen to you, feel your embrace, and rest in your love - and then to speak to others from that place. In Jesus' name, amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

#### DAY 2: MIDDAY/EVENING OFFICE

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: Psalm 130

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD;

O Lord, hear my voice.

Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.

If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins,

O Lord, who could stand?

But with you there is forgiveness;

therefore you are feared.

I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope.

My soul waits for the Lord

more than watchmen wait for the morning more than watchmen wait for the morning.

O Israel, put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full

redemption. He himself will redeem Israel

from all their sins. (NIV 1984)

### Devotional

I am able to "wait for the Lord" for something - a new opportunity, blessings for my children, the healing of a friendship, or a safe trip out of town. It is much more difficult for me to "wait for the Lord" for nothing, but to simply be still before him. Yet this is one of the keys to loving others well. Although I often try to pull it off, I know that I cannot really be present for another person when my inner world is filled with preoccupations and distractions. This is one of the biggest challenges I face in being present for others - being still within my own soul. Stillness is the precondition of presence. I must first be still to myself if I am to be still with another. And, of course, I must learn to be still before God if I am to learn to be still in myself. Presence begins with a still place within one's self. If I have no such still inner place, I cannot really be present for others. - David Benner

### Question to Consider

What is the biggest challenge you face in being still before the Lord?

### Prayer

Lord, I confess to you that I am not sure what it looks like to still and quiet my soul before you. Lead me on a journey to discover that still place within myself, and I will follow wherever and however you lead me. In Jesus' name, amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

### DAY 3: MORNING/MIDDAY OFFICE

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: Matthew 25:34 - 36, 40

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"

### Devotional

In 1952 Mother Teresa began picking up the dying in the slums, Calcutta, India. By 1980 she and over three thousand members of her order, the Missionaries of Charity, were working in fifty-some countries. Her teachings and life give us profound insight into what it means to follow Jesus as emotional and spiritual adults in our world. She wrote: I never look at the masses as my responsibility. I look only at the individual. I can love only one person at a time. I can feed only one person at a time. Just one, one, one. You get closer to Christ by coming closer to each other. As Jesus said, "Whatever you do to the least of my brethren, you do it to me." So you begin ... I begin. I picked up one person.... The whole work is only a drop in the ocean. But if we

don't put the drop in, the ocean would be one drop less. Same thing for you. Same thing in your family. Same thing in the church where you go. Just begin... one, one, one! At the end of our lives, we will not be judged by how many diplomas we have received, how much money we have made or how many great things we have done. We will be judged by "I was hungry and you gave me to eat. I was naked and you clothed me. I was homeless and you took me in.

#### Question to Consider

How can you begin to see Jesus Christ in the people you meet this week?

#### Prayer

Lord, I am often overwhelmed by the needs of the world around me. Thank you that you are responsible for the world, and I am not. Help me to see the individual today - the "one, one, one"-so that the words and actions that flow from my life might reflect your life. In Jesus' name, amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

#### DAY 3: MIDDAY/EVENING OFFICE

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: Luke 10:30 - 37

In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. Look after him, he said, and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise.

#### Devotional

The great Jewish theologian Martin Buber described the healthiest Or maturest relationship possible between two human beings as an "I-Thou relationship. In such a relationship, I recognize that I am made in the image of God, and so is every other person. This makes them a "Thou to me. They have dignity and worth, and are to be treated with respect. I affirm them as being a unique and separate human being apart from me. In most of our human relationships, however, we treat people as objects -as an "it. In an "I-It" relationship, I treat you as a means to an end - as I might a toothbrush or a car. I talk to people in order to get something off my chest, not to be with them as separate individuals. I talk about people - authority figures, people in the news, and so on - as if they were subhuman. I get frustrated when people don't conform to my

plans or see things the way I do. The priest and the Levite did not make the connection that emotional maturity (loving well) and loving God are inseparable. They missed the "Thou lying on the side of the road and simply passed him by.??

#### Question to Consider

Take a few moments to consider the people you will encounter today. What might it Look like for you to slow down and treat each one as a "thou" rather than an "it"?

#### Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me. I am aware, Lord, of how often I treat people like an ".? Help me to view each person I meet with the eyes and heart of Christ. In Jesus' name, amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

#### DAY 4: MORNING/MIDDAY OFFICE

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: Luke 7:36 - 39

When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is - that she is a sinner."

#### Devotional

The Pharisee did not see the sinful woman as a human being loved by God. He saw a sinner, an interruption, and a person without the right to be at the dinner table. Jesus saw her very differently. Love springs from awareness. It is only inasmuch as you see someone as he or she really is here and now and not as they are in your memory or your desire or in your imagination or projection that you can truly love them, otherwise it is not the person that you love but the idea that you have formed of this person, or this person as the object of your desire not as he or she is in themselves. Therefore the first act of love is to see this person or this object, this reality as it truly is. And this involves the enormous discipline of dropping your desires, your prejudices, your memories, your projections, your selective way of looking, a discipline so great that most people would rather plunge headlong into good actions and service than submit to the burning fire of this asceticism... So the first ingredient of love is to really see the other. The second ingredient is equally important to see yourself, to ruthlessly flash the light of awareness on your motives, your emotions, your needs, your dishonesty, your self-seeking, your tendency to control and manipulate. -Anthony De Mello

### Question to Consider

What sometimes distracts you from seeing the people you are with as they really are?

### Prayer

Lord, I have been forgiven for much more than I will ever realize.

Yet I can relate to the Pharisee in this parable. Help me to slow down and be present with you and others so that I might truly see people as you do. In Jesus name, amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

## DAY 4: MIDDAY/EVENING OFFICE

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: Mark 10:41 - 44

When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.

### Devotional

Jesus taught that the kingdom of God is an upside-down kingdom. The disciples kept thinking of the worldly model of power over people rather than Jesus' model of power under - to serve. It seems easier to be God than to love God, easier to control people than to love people, easier to own life than to love life. Jesus asks, "Do you love me?" We ask, "Can we sit at your right hand and your left hand in your kingdom?" (Matthew 20:21). Ever since the snake said, "The day you eat of this tree your eyes will be open and you will be like gods, knowing good from evil" (Genesis 3:5), we have been tempted to replace love with power. Jesus lived that temptation in the most agonizing way from the desert to the cross. The long painful history of the Church is the history of people ever and again tempted to choose power over love, control over the cross, being a leader over being led. Henri Nouwen?

### Question to Consider

What might be one way you can let go of power and control and, in love, choose to serve someone today?

### Prayer

Father, you know how much I struggle with trying to love some of the difficult people in my life. I find it easier, like the disciples, to exercise control and have power over people. Fill me with your power so that I can choose to serve, in love, the people I encounter this day. In Jesus' name, amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

## DAY 5 MORNING/MIDDAY OFFICE:

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: Matthew 7:1 -5

"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye, when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

Devotional

From the third to the fifth century, the Desert Fathers left a rich deposit of wisdom about how a genuine life with God must lead to a mature, non-judgmental love toward others. The monk must die to his neighbor and never judge him at all in any way whatever. If you are occupied with your own faults, you have no time to see those of your neighbor. Many of us have no trouble at all dispensing advice or pointing out the wrongdoings of others. We don't tend to allow others to be themselves before God or move at their own pace. Instead, we project onto them our own discomfort with their choice to live life differently than we do. The result is that we end up eliminating them in our minds, either trying to make them like us, or falling into a "who cares?" indifference. Unless I first take the log out of my own eye, knowing that I have huge blind spots, I am dangerous. I must see the extensive damage sin has done to every part of who I am - emotion, intellect, body, will, and spirit - before I can attempt to remove the speck from my brother's eye.

Questions to Consider

Is there someone God is calling you to stop judging? What might it look like to bless and extend mercy to them?

Prayer

Abba Father, forgive me for having so many opinions about so many people and judging them. Wipe my slate clean and give me grace to see my own logs instead of rushing to judge others. In Jesus' name, amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

## DAY 5 MIDDAY/EVENING OFFICE

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: Matthew 10:28, 34 - 36

"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell."Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to



the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, a man's enemies will be the members of his own household..

#### Devotional

Unresolved conflicts are one of the greatest tensions in the lives of Christians today. Most of us hate them. We don't know what to do with them. We prefer to ignore the difficult issues and settle for a false peace, hoping against hope that the issues will somehow go away. They don't, and as a result we end up: saying one thing to people's faces and another behind their back. Making promises we have no intention of keeping, blaming, or becoming sarcastic. Giving in because we are afraid of not being liked. "Leaking" out our anger through subtle criticism. telling only half of the truth because we can't bear to hurt a friend's feelings. Saying yes when we mean no. Avoiding people and giving them the silent treatment. However, conflict and trouble were central to the mission of Jesus. He disrupted the false peace of his disciples, the crowds, the religious leaders, the Romans, those buying and selling in the Temple, and even in families. Jesus understood that we cannot build his kingdom on lies and pretense. Only the truth will do.

#### Question to Consider

Where are you experiencing tension in relationships that you are afraid to disrupt?

#### Prayer

Lord, you know that everything in me wants to run away from tension and conflict, or at least to spin the truth in my favor! Transform my ways of relating to others. Help me to speak the truth with great love and tenderness, and may you be honored and glorified in my relationships. In Jesus name, amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)