

Quiet Day 9 March 2024

Listening to the God Who Speaks – Learning to Hear the Heartbeat of God

9:30 - 9:40 Introduction

9:40 - 10:40 First Conference

9:40 - 9:55 First session of reflections on the theme of the day

9:55 - 10:18 First session for thoughtful, conversational prayer: Restrooms, refreshments, stroll the grounds, reflect in the church. The entire campus is open to us. Please maintain quiet. Please keep talking to a minimum and please talk quietly. Thank you!

10:20 - 10:40 First session of Silent Prayer in the Sanctuary. (Or thoughtful meditation in the Music Center.)
[Enter silently from 10:18 to 10:20. At 10:20 we will intone the bell and begin silent prayer.]

10:40 - 11:40 Second Conference

10:40 - 10:55 Second session of reflections on the theme of the day

10:55 - 11:18 Second session for thoughtful, conversational prayer: Restrooms, refreshments, stroll the grounds, reflect in the church. The entire campus is open to us. Please maintain quiet. Please keep talking to a minimum and please talk quietly. Thank you!

11:20 - 11:40 Second session of Silent Prayer in the Sanctuary. (Or thoughtful meditation in the Music Center.)
[Enter silently from 11:18 to 11:20. At 11:20 we will intone the bell and begin praying.]

11:40 - 12:00 Third Conference

11:40 - 11:55 Third session of reflections on the theme of the day

11:55 - 12:18 Third session for thoughtful, conversational prayer: Restrooms, refreshments, stroll the grounds, reflect in the church. The entire campus is open to us. Please maintain quiet. Please keep talking to a minimum and please talk quietly. Thank you!

12:20 - 12:40 Third session of Silent Prayer in the Sanctuary. (Or thoughtful meditation in the Music Center.)
[Enter silently from 12:18 to 12:20. At 12:20 we will intone the bell and begin praying.]

12:40 - 1:00 Eucharist. All are welcome.

Listening to the God Who Speaks

The gospel of John tells us that at the Last Supper, the Beloved Disciple leaned against Jesus' breast and in so doing "heard the heartbeat of God." That heartbeat can still be heard in all that God has made, as we become still and aware. Wisdom teachers throughout the centuries have been teaching that God's revelation, God's heartbeat is continuing to be known to us through the Three Great Books: The Book of Creation; the Book of Sacred Scriptures; and The Book of our Heart's Journey. Using the prayers of Celtic Christians throughout the ages, today we will ponder together the revelation of God through the Book of Creation to experience more deeply Divine Presence – the heartbeat of God in all that is.

Listening to the God Who Speaks Learning to Hear the Heartbeat of God in All That Is

First Conference Readings

*I arise today
through a mighty strength,
the invocation of the Trinity,
through belief in the Threeness,
through confession of the Oneness
of the Creator of creation.
I arise today, through
the strength of heaven,
the light of the sun,
the radiance of the moon,
the splendor of fire,
the speed of lightning,
the swiftness of wind,
the depth of the sea,
the stability of the earth,
the firmness of rock.*

Breastplate of St. Patrick

I watch this morning
for the light that the darkness has not overcome.
I watch for the fire that was in the beginning
and that burns still in the brilliance of the rising
sun.
I watch for the glow of life that gleams in the
growing earth
and glistens in sea and sky.
I watch for your light, O God,
in the eyes of every living creature
and in the ever-living flame of my own soul.
If the grace of seeing were mine this day
I would glimpse you in all that lives.
Grant me the grace of seeing this day.
Grant me the grace of seeing.

JP Newell, Celtic Benediction

Second Conference Readings

*Bless to me O God
my soul that comes from on high.
Bless to me O God
my body that is of earth
Bless to me O God
each thing my eye sees
each sound my ear hears.
Bless to me O God
each scent that goes to my nostrils
each taste that goes to my lips
each ray that guides my way*

I awake this morning
in the presence of the holy angels of God.
May heaven open wide before me
above me and around me
that I may see the Christ of my love
And his sunlit company
In all the things of earth this day.

JP Newell, Celtic Prayers from Iona

Third Conference Readings

*In the beginning O God
You shaped my soul and set its weave
You formed my body and gave it breath.
Renew me this day in the image of your love
O Great God, grant me your light
O Great God grant me your grace
O Great God, grant me your joy this day
And let me be made pure in the well of your health.*

This day and this night, may I know O God
the deep peace of the running wave
the deep peace of the flowing air
the deep peace of the quiet earth
the deep peace of the shining stars
the deep peace of the Son of Peace.

Carmina Gaedelica

Nothing could be more down to earth or more humbling than this Boundless Presence, which just is. It doesn't have to prove itself. It doesn't have to acquire anything. It just is

The essence of Centering Prayer is consenting to God's presence and action within. The seven stages of Centering Prayer outlined below dispose us towards ever-deepening self-surrender. These seven stages might be called the process of Centering Prayer. I summarize them as follows:

1. **Silence** is consenting to God's presence – what Jesus calls the Kingdom of God – within and among us. External silence supports this movement.
2. **Solitude** flows from interior silence. Disregarding our interior dialogue leads to “resting in God” (St Gregory the Great) and to consciousness without particular content.
3. **Solidarity** is the awareness of increasing oneness with God, with the whole human family, and with all of creation.
4. **Service** is following the ever-present inspirations of the Spirit not only during the time of formal prayer, but in the details of everyday life. It is a spontaneous expression of solidarity: God in us serving God in others.
5. **Stillness** is what Jesus called “prayer in secret” (Matt. 6:6). This is the experience of God's presence beyond rational concepts, beyond preoccupation with one's personal thoughts and desires.
6. **Simplicity** is the integration of contemplation and action, a growing capacity to live in the midst of duality – the ups and downs of daily life – without losing the non-dual perspective. Contemplation is not the same as action. They are distinct but they are not separate.
7. **Surrender** is the total gift of self to God, a movement from union to unity. It marks the beginning of what Jesus calls “eternal life” as an abiding state.

As we are moved through the stages of grace, our perspective changes in regard to Centering Prayer, the contemplative life, and God. In between the steps there may be delightful plateaus as well as dark nights, all of which have physical, mental, and spiritual consequences. The most transforming dark nights seem to be primarily psychological states, and the darkest of all is the purely spiritual suffering that arises from just being a creature, apparently unequipped for the hazards and trials of this life, but going through them with invincible confidence in God's love.
