

"All goes well when God is, so to speak, both the author and the object of our faith, the one complementing and augmenting the other. It is like the right side of a beautiful tapestry being worked stitch by stitch on the reverse side. Neither the stitches nor the needle are visible, but, one by one, those stitches make a magnificent pattern that only becomes apparent when the work is completed and the right side exposed to the light of day; although while it is in progress there is no sign of its beauty and wonder...

Is not a picture painted on canvas by the application of one stroke of the brush at a time? Similarly the cruel chisel destroys a stone with each cut. But what the stone suffers by repeated blows is no less than the shape the mason is making of it. And should a poor stone be asked 'What is happening to you?', it might reply 'Don't ask me. All I know is that for my part there is nothing for me to know or do, only to remain steady under the hand of my master and to love him and suffer him to work out my destiny. It is for him to know how to achieve this. I know neither what he is doing nor why. I only know that he is doing what is best and most perfect, and I suffer each cut of the chisel as though it were the best thing for me, even though, to tell the truth, each is my idea of ruin, destruction and defacement. But, ignoring all this, I rest contented with the present moment. Thinking only of my duty to it, I submit to the work of this skillful master without caring to know what it is.' ~ Jean-Pierre De Caussade, The Sacrament of the Present Moment, HarperSanFrancisco, pages 53, 54, 56

De Cassaude uses three images from art to help us understand the mystery of God's actions in our lives: the weaving of tapestry, the painting of a picture and the chiseling of sculpture. I find the first two much more appealing than the third. And I cannot really say with consistency that I am "contented with the present moment...without caring to know" what God is up to! "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief!"

Yet, his images do strike a chord with my experiences, especially the third image with its feelings of pain, ruin, and destruction somehow intermingled with confidence in the ultimate outcome and a sincere desire to trust in the will and the skill of the master.

I believe that De Cassaude is trying to teach us about trusting God, and in trusting, to find God's peace in "The Sacrament of the Present Moment." Whether I am comfortable or not with his images, I too want to learn that kind of trust and to feel "safe in the hands of God." Michael Perry has written a hymn based on Psalm 27 with that line for a title:

"Safe in the hands of God who made me, What can there be that I should fear?"

God is my light and my salvation, strong is his help when foes are near.

This I have prayed and will seek after, that I may walk with God each day;

then will he give me his protection, no trouble shall my heart dismay.

Midweek Reflection # 17 ~ "Lord, Help me to trust" September 17, 2008

God of my life, my Lord, my master, father and mother now to me;  
come, shield me from the threat of evil, open your hands and set me free!

Teach me your way and lead me onwards, save me from those who do me wrong;  
**give me the grace to wait with patience, help me to trust, hold firm, be strong.**  
(Michael Perry, from Psalms for Today and Songs from the Psalms, Jubilate Hymns)

May God's grace enable you to rest secure in the sacrament of the present moment.

Trusting in God's mercy,

Howie