

Midweek Reflection # 5 ~ Two Object lessons

"O Holy Spirit of God, visit now this soul of mine, and tarry within it until eventide. Inspire all my thoughts, pervade my imaginations, suggest all my decisions. Lodge in my will's most inward citadel and order all my doings. Be with me in my silence and in my speech, in my haste and in my leisure, in company and in solitude, in the freshness of the morning and in the weariness of the evening; and give me grace at all times to rejoice in Thy mysterious companionship."

~ John Baillie, **A Diary of Private Prayer**

John Baillie's beautiful prayer would be difficult to pray convincingly were it not for two Gospel truths that have become much more real to me during my current pilgrimage. These closely related truths are those of

- 1) the Incarnation of Christ and
- 2) the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

I hold these truths all the more firmly by picturing them in two object lessons.

1) Several years ago I was riding in the passenger seat of our car on a trip, half dozing, half praying when I read the words printed on all passenger side wing mirrors:

"OBJECTS IN MIRROR ARE CLOSER THAN THEY APPEAR"

I remembered St. Augustine's comment: "God is closer to us than we are to ourselves" and suddenly my car's wing mirror was a constant reminder to me of the Incarnation and God's real presence in my life!

"And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory of a Father's only son, full of grace and truth."

~ John 1:14 NRSV

In a little classic simply titled **Prayer**, Ole Hallesby, the Norwegian devotional writer, sums up this truth:

"God is round about us in Christ on every hand, with His many-sided and all-sufficient grace! All we need do is to open our hearts. Prayer is the breath of the soul, the organ by which we receive Christ into our parched and withered hearts. He says, 'If any man open the door, I will come into him.'"

2) The second half of this Incarnational truth is revealed in Christ's promise to his disciples in John 14:

"On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you" (v.20)

"Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them, and make our home with them." (v.23)

C.S. Lewis calls this Transposition: "Just as in the person of Jesus Christ, God Himself became incarnate, so after Pentecost the risen Christ indwells the believer by the descent of the Holy Spirit."

~ Leanne Payne, Real Presence The Holy Spirit in the Works of C.S. Lewis

"When Christians say the Christ-life is in them, they do not mean simply something mental or moral. When they speak of being 'in Christ' or of Christ being 'in them,' this is not simply a way of saying they are thinking about Christ or copying Him. They mean that Christ is actually operating through them; that the whole mass of Christians are the physical organism through which Christ acts ~ that we are His fingers and muscles, the cells of His body."

~ C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

The object that illustrates this truth is a Russian Nesting Doll, with its multiple little compartments, one inside the other. It might seem a strange hobby for a 62 year old man, but I have a growing collection of these dolls because parishioners who have been reminded by the object lesson of St. Paul's *"Christ in you, the hope of glory"* have picked them up for me. They do give silent witness to the truth of the living presence of God: Christ in the Father, we abiding in Christ, the Holy Spirit dwelling in us!

As I journey through these weeks of treatment, and as Renie and I face together the uncertainties that any cancer diagnosis raises, it is helpful to use these simple object lessons to remind me of God's merciful presence and care. I see the words on the wing mirrors on the cars of my team of drivers each week day as we drive into Boston for my radiation sessions and the reminder of God's closeness encourages me to pray for **"grace at all times to rejoice in God's mysterious companionship."**

May your week be blessed by the indwelling Holy Spirit lifting you into God's peaceful presence.

Under God's Mercy, Howie