

## Faith & life – Intimacy with God

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In the secret of thy presence,  
Where the pure in heart may dwell,  
Are the springs of sacred service  
And a power that none can tell.

“Without the inner life, the outer life lacks meaning; without the outer life, the inner life lacks substance.”

Booth’s social gospel recognized the physical and spiritual needs of people, yet if people were desperately hungry, he would feed them first.

Jesus would rise early in the morning to pray intimately with His heavenly Father, before leaving to minister – that is why he came. (Mk.1:35-39)

I am convinced that nurturing a deeper spirituality leads to inner freedom and loving service.

Our doing flows from our being, which flows from our identity. Our true identity is known through letting God into our vulnerable space. Then we can then freely begin to respond to others in light of this new grace-filled relationship.

Jesus says “Come to me”, but perhaps we identify with George Herbert: “Love bade me welcome, yet my soul drew back, Guilty of dust and sin.” This soulful Invitation into the interior life, the vulnerable part of each human, can be uncomfortable, embarrassing, or down-right terrifying.

Some have likened intimacy to porcupines on a cold night – craving each other’s warmth, but experiencing the hurt of the quills upon contact.

Yet I have been surprised, when sharing devotional messages at seniors’ residences or shelters, that people want to hear something of depth for their souls. Their aging or well-worn exteriors do not cover their need for depth, or intimacy.



Paul Tournier, the Swiss psychiatrist shared: “Deep within our humanness is a profound need to be heard, and understood, not in part, but as a whole. Discover how to meet this need in yourself and in others.”

For the Christian believer, knowledge that we are loved, known, and at peace with God, makes all the difference. This applies not only to the work of God in us, but also the work of God through us.

Intimacy grows through prayer. Increasingly for me it is not having a “gimme list”, (although I have a list), but is a lifestyle, an awareness, not limited to time or space or proper syntax. Brother Lawrence taught us the sacrament of the present moment – he was as close to God washing the pots as he was formally worshiping with his fellow friars.

I continue to let go of pride, and like a child (I think Jesus had something to say about this) share my heart, open up my soul to my Abba Father (Daddy). Simple, heart-felt prayers get to the point. Three of Anne Lamott’s favourite prayers are: Help, Thanks, Wow.

Intimacy means entering the secret place, the holy place, creating opportunity to hear God’s voice in the stillness, an increasing challenge in our world but a necessity. "Solitude provides a shelter from noise and distraction, and that can be scary. We have become almost addicted to both." (Ortberg)

A storyteller I met, upon hearing I was a Salvationist, remarked: “You people are really good at listening to people’s stories.” Richard Rohr has said God often comes to us disguised as our lives. As children of God, made in his image, each of our stories are unique, genuine, holy.

May we who are part of God’s salvation story continue to hold carefully the stories that are shared with us - at coffee-break, in the soup kitchen, the counselling group, at Tim’s, the testimony meeting.

Ruth Tracy pens: “Only as we truly know him, can we truly make him known.” I would also add, only as we know we are truly known, can we make him known.

"Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery that it is - touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it because in the last analysis all moments are key moments, and life itself is grace." (Frederick Buechner)

The following intimate prayer is one that I meditate upon often, and share whenever I have occasion:

I am the beloved child of God the Father, I am the beloved friend of Jesus the son,  
I am the beloved temple of God the Holy Spirit. I am enfolded in the three in one.

"Above all, always see Jesus in every person, and consequently treat each one not only as an equal and as a brother or sister, but also with great humility, respect and selfless generosity."  
(Charles de Foucauld)

"Invited into intimate relationship – we are Saved to Serve"

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