



Chapter 11

“Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away, and gives you everything. When we give ourselves to Him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open, wide the doors to Christ- and you will find true life.” Pope Benedict XVI

Life ebbs and flows. Times of troubling discernment can lead to tranquil pools of peace --not the peace of eternity, but rather a foretaste. Not sustainable in this life, but fulfilling nonetheless. In this life of shadows we are privileged every now and again to get a glimpse of the real thing...imparted by the Hand of God and meant to be relished, internalized, and shared...

The Nest

One of the many new and rich traditions I was introduced to as a Catholic was the custom of actually spending time sitting and praying *in* the Church. Since Catholics believe that Christ is “sacramentally and uniquely” present in every Catholic Church, residing in the tabernacle as a consecrated Host, many Catholics choose to pray in the Church, in His Presence, as opposed to praying at home (though it is perfectly acceptable to pray at home, or anywhere at all, for that matter). So that God’s people can make a visit, many Catholic Churches stay unlocked all night or at least very late into the night. One of my favorite places to go was, and still is, the upstairs chapel in St. Matthew’s Cathedral, Washington DC. I like to sit in the Chapel of the Holy Angels, where I came into the Church. I call it my “Heavenly Nest.” It seems quite fitting to take flight up those stairs as my favorite Psalm is Psalm 91 where it states that God “covers us with His feathers” and we “find shelter under His wings” when we “dwell in the secret place” of

Him. While sitting there one day, I had an inspiration that when I visited that chapel, I should go and just *be* with Jesus, not bring my laundry list of asks, but instead, just be with Him and sing to Him and love Him from the depths of my being.

One day, while perched in my nest, I began to very quietly sing the song, “Behold the Lamb of God” and as I looked up, I saw a tiny stained glass window with the image of a beautiful little lamb on it. I smiled and my heart welled up with thanksgiving to Him. I then heard Him say these words: “You console My Heart.”

I could not believe it! How could *I* console *Him*, the Maker of the World? But somehow, I had. I thought about all of the years of Bible teaching and good works I had done in the name of Jesus. I remembered the mission trips, the lesson plans, the travel and speaking, the weariness with which I fought to do all I felt He had asked me to do—but never in any of these activities did I hear Him say that I consoled Him.

Now, I was merely sitting at His feet, gazing at Him, when I heard Him say those words. And then again, He came in fullness. I had an impression of being enveloped in a beautiful Light. It was not like before. It was a heavy, weighty feeling of being swallowed up into Light. Yet, it was not just Light—it was an all-consuming, burning embrace of Love. Everything I had ever done wrong was consumed in this Love, like a straw being consumed in a fire. I could not, even for a moment, feel anything but Love. It was so weighty, but in the most miraculous way. It was like “I never wanted to move” sort of a weight. It was as if all of the struggles and works and

exhaustions were somehow being pressed out of me. All of the “me” was being consumed by Something so far, far bigger than myself. I could not help but think that no one could ever stand before this LOVE and not be totally consumed by it. There was no fear, as “Perfect Love casts out all fear.”[1 John 4:18] There was no guilt, for “he whom the Son has set free, is free indeed...[John 8:36]” And that is exactly what I was experiencing. I could not move for quite some time, nor did I want to. The Light was so joyous! And it brought absolute peace. It had color as well as heat. It was white, then yellow in the center, and radiated out like a rainbow with purple at the very edges, and it danced! Swirling and moving, like a fire that would never burn out. But mostly, above all else, it *loved*. It was *Love* itself, and I never ever wanted it to end.

Of course, it did end, as I am finite and live here where all things are finite. But it made me so look forward to a time when things will be eternal. Love is eternal, but all of the things of this earth will pass away—all the trivial things, all the little mistakes and oopses of our life. All of the misunderstandings, and even the theologies we hold to so tightly, sometimes at the expense of loving our neighbor, and, therefore, at the expense of loving Him—these, too, will pass away. Seeing all earthly things in comparison to this great Love—how insignificant they all seemed. When there is no time, no end, there will be only one thing that matters—how we loved—how we loved Him and how we loved each other. I cannot imagine being separated from this great Love, not even for a moment. The worst words that could ever be heard would be, “Depart from Me, I never knew you.”[Matt. 7:23] With even the tiniest taste of this immortal Love, all will forever long to run to our loving God and not from Him in fear. We need only look to the cross to see and experience the deep love He has for us through Jesus Christ.

I saw for the first time how our ruptured Church must grieve Him—this all-Loving Lord—and yet how His great love will even swallow this up, all of our schisms and factions. But for us here, now, division is a painful reality. My own dear family—even we are skewed. We cannot agree on how we will worship and follow God. It breaks my heart, and therefore I am quite sure it breaks His as well. I asked Him about this and this is what I heard, “Your family is a picture of the Church today.” I feel like a modern prophet. In the Old Testament, God often used real people and the events of their daily lives as concrete examples, living pictures to portray what was happening spiritually to them. Hosea was one of those “picture prophets.” He was told to marry a prostitute to give Israel a visual example of how God was feeling about Israel’s faithlessness. Hosea was the picture of fidelity, and Israel was the promiscuous harlot, constantly wandering off chasing after others.

While my family is by no means an apt metaphor, I do feel it sadly portrays the split in the family of God due to theological, cultural, and vocabulary reasons. We are a picture of the Church Universal. And while we do make it work by His grace, it is far less than the ideal of unity He intended and spoke of in John 17:21: “May they all be One, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.”

I pray that someday we will be one, but until then I ask this: that God give us the faith to believe He is able to do all things, the grace to hope in Him when our own well of hope runs dry and most importantly, that He place in our hearts the love for Him and others that will change our own hearts to be like His—and then to set the world on fire.

Not so many years back, while wandering on the path, groping for clarity in the mists of my journey, I heard this hymn in a tiny Catholic Church in the hills of West Virginia. I was riveted as it verbalized all I felt the Lord was saying to me. It so beautifully expressed my heart's desire to be with Him and "live deeply this new life." I am so thankful for the Catholic Church. I have truly come home to the fullness of the faith through the sacraments and the Church's teachings. I have had a true transformation in my heart, mind, and spirit. I have had a metamorphosis of my soul. I pray that my sharing of my journey (or I should say *our* journey—His and mine—I just rather timidly and sometimes stubbornly cooperated) will, in some way, encourage others who not only want to walk more closely with our Lord, but also, want to spread their wings...and fly.

Hosea

Come back to Me with all your heart. Don't let fear keep us apart.

Trees do bend, though straight and tall, so must we to other's call.

Long have I waited for your coming home to Me and living deeply our new life.

The wilderness will lead you to your heart where I will speak.

Integrity and justice with tenderness, you shall know.

Long have I waited for your coming home to Me and living deeply our new life.

You shall sleep secure with peace;

Faithfulness will be your joy.

Long have I waited for your coming home to Me and living deeply our new life.

Praise: I praise You! You are my Creator—Powerful and Almighty, yet humble enough to let me console You.

Prayer: Dear Lord, please let me never get so busy *doing* for You that I forget to just *be* with You, and love You, and console Your Sacred Heart. I pray that You will give me the faith, hope, and love I need to follow You with my whole heart, no matter where that path may lead, and to love others, even if they do not follow the same path that I do. Please give me Your eyes to see the world and Your heart to burn within me in order to set the world on fire. Lord, please give me more and more of You, and then the courage that I need to spread my wings and fly.

Promise: “Blessed are those who have been called to the wedding feast of the Lamb.”

Revelation 19:9

Proof of the Promise: Someday, all that will last or matter is the way we loved Him and loved each other.

Ponder: Journal here about your relationship with God...Express your heart to Him. If you don't have a friendship with God, do you desire one? Express that to Him (and see *Personal Friendship with God*, Appendix 3)