

Quietness

When routine is disturbed what will you put in its place? It seems to me to be all too easy to hear the demand of the apparently urgent over the important. Those small tasks that are not essential but which fill a space of time in a recognisable way but mask the underlying call of God on our attention. Recognise this?!

I would invite you in these strange times to carve out a period of time in each day to sit in stillness with God, or walk or cycle or dig the garden with Him if you find it easier to concentrate like that.

Sometimes I find it helpful to read a Psalm, or a poem to give me food for thought.

You may have heard me quote the American poet, Mary Oliver:

Praying

It doesn't have to be
the blue iris, it could be
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
small stones; just
pay attention, then patch

a few words together and don't try
to make them elaborate, this isn't
a contest but the doorway

into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak.

The most important thing seems to be present to yourself and to God.
'Somebody once said that the deepest problem in prayer is not the absence of God but the absence of me. I'm not actually there. My mind is everywhere.' (Rowan Williams quoted in 'Finding Your Hidden Treasure')

A routine before sleep might be to reflect on the day, using the examen:
Take some time to sit with God, reviewing the day and considering the following questions:

What has been good today?

Take some time to write down everything you are thankful for...the taste of your morning coffee, something that made you laugh, a conversation you had, something you read, anything. Thank God for these moments.

What has been hard?

When did you feel disconnected? What feelings came up that were uncomfortable? What unresolved thoughts do you have? What anxieties, fears or

worries did you encounter? Talk to God about these, and listen for what he might say to you about them.

Ask God to show you how he was with you in the good and the difficult today. Thank him for His presence and receive His grace.

What does it look like to trust him for tomorrow?

Here are a couple of poems that have been sent to me recently. They may help you to articulate to God some of what you are experiencing just now.

Pandemic

What if you thought of it
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—
the most sacred of times?

Cease from travel.

Cease from buying and selling.

Give up, just for now,
on trying to make the world
different than it is.

Sing. Pray. Touch only those
to whom you commit your life.

Center down.

And when your body has become still,
reach out with your heart.

Know that we are connected
In ways that are terrifying and beautiful.
(You could hardly deny it now.)

Know that our lives
are in one another's hands.

(Surely, that has become clear.)

Do not reach out your hands.

Reach out your heart.

Reach out your words.

Reach out all the tendrils
of compassion that move, invisibly,
where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love—
for better or for worse,
in sickness and in health,
so long as we all shall live.

By Lynn Ungar

A Poem

And still, with blissful unawareness, the daffodils trumpet their call of Spring.

The sun in all its shining splendour, reappears through the clouds as if a reminder that all darkness has light behind it, through it, despite it.

The children's laughter, their in the moment-ness, their obedience to the present, also speaks of life's gift to the world. Presence, love, connection.

And still, while the world is busy fearing, Mother Nature carries on with her work, creating, changing, making new, spouting forth her beautiful creation for us.

Imagine if we could see these challenging times as teachable moments, as opportunities to lean into gratitude, to see God in the disruptions. The continuous washing of our hands as prayer. The moments of forced quietness as contemplation.

And still...

By Moragh Randall

I would love to hear how you get on with the new habit of setting time aside to be still with God.

With my prayers

Mary-Jane Jorden

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