**NEW LIFE WITH GOD AFTER THE PANDEMIC** – January 2021, Fr. John Auther, SJ

Video Session 4 – Week of 1.25.21

**Points:**

**A full and abiding sense of gratitude leads us to choose simpler things to appreciate but to appreciate them more.**

1. The simplicity of nature can become an experience that leads us to God.
2. The simple interactions with family and friends can make us very grateful to God.
3. The simple tasks of each day are holy tasks for which we should be grateful.

After praying with a passage or passage on the next pages, you may want also want to answer the questions at the end of the readings in a journal or notebook.

Method that may be helpful:

Preparatory Prayer:

Pray to find the Lord more fully in all the aspects of your life especially in this particular time of the pandemic.

Lectio Divina:

Read the passage that you choose, stopping as soon as you feel drawn to reflect on the passage or you feel moved to pray.  Let go of your sense of wanting to learn or to finish the passage, but instead desire to be open to God and, if you feel a call to just sit quietly in the presence of God, indulge in that.  As you get distracted, return gently to the passage and read some more or read parts of it again.  Distractions are natural.

**Readings:**

*From Jean Pierre De Caussade – Our Simple Tasks are the Path to Holiness*

God continues to speak today as He spoke in former times to our fathers when there were no directors as at present, nor any regular method of direction. Then all spirituality was comprised in fidelity to the designs of God, for there was no regular system of guidance in the spiritual life to explain it in detail, nor so many instructions, precepts and examples as there are now. Doubtless our present difficulties render this necessary, but it was not so in the first ages when souls were more simple and straightforward. Then, for those who led a spiritual life, each moment brought some duty to be faithfully accomplished. Their whole attention was thus concentrated consecutively like a hand that marks the hours which, at each moment, traverses the space allotted to it. Their minds, incessantly animated by the impulsion of divine grace, turned imperceptibly to each new duty that presented itself by the permission of God at different hours of the day. Such were the hidden springs by which the conduct of Mary was actuated. Mary was the most simple of all creatures, and the most closely united to God. Her answer to the angel when she said: "Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum": contained all the mystic theology of her ancestors to whom everything was reduced, as it is now, to the purest, simplest submission of the soul to the will of God, under whatever form it presents itself.

*Luke 10: 21-24*

21 In that same hour Jesus was filled with joy in the Holy Spirit and said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the learned and wise yet revealed them to little children; yes, Father, such was your benevolent will. 22 All things have been given to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, or the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son is pleased to reveal him.” 23 Then turning towards the disciples he said in private, “Blessed are your eyes that see what you are seeing! 24 For I tell you that many are the prophets and kings who desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, yet did not hear it.”

*From Carlo Carretto – Simplicity in Loving*

Don’t worry about what you ought to do. Worry about loving. Don’t interrogate heaven repeatedly and uselessly saying, “What course of action should I pursue?” Concentrate on loving instead.

And by loving you will find out what is for you. Loving, you will listen to the Voice. Loving, you will find peace.

Love is the fulfillment of the law and should be everyone’s rule of life; in the end it’s the solution to every problem, the motive for all good.

“Love and do as you will.”

This is the crux. When I love I can no longer do as I will.

When I love I am love’s prisoner; and love is tremendous in its demands when it has God as its object, especially a crucified God. I can no longer do my own will. I must do the will of Jesus, which is the will of the Father….

The will of God. That’s what rules the world and moves the stars, what converts the nations, what starts all life and brings triumph out of death.

And if the will of God urges you to seek out the poor, to give up all you possess, or to leave for distant lands, what does the rest matter? Or if it calls you to found a family, or take on a job in a city, why should you have any doubts?

“His will is our peace,” says Dante. And perhaps that is the expression which best brings into focus our deep dependence on God.

Matthew 6: 25-34

**25**“Therefore, I say to you, take no thought about your life, what you will eat, or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body than clothing? **26**Look at the birds of the air, for they do not sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they? **27**Who among you by taking thought can add a cubit[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+6&version=MEV#fen-MEV-23310a)] to his stature?

**28**“Why take thought about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: They neither work, nor do they spin. **29**Yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not dressed like one of these. **30**Therefore, if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is here and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? **31**Therefore, take no thought, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ **32**(For the Gentiles seek after all these things.) For your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. **33**But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be given to you. **34**Therefore, take no thought about tomorrow, for tomorrow will take thought about the things of itself. Sufficient to the day is the trouble thereof.

**The following is not a reading but a type of exercise.**

*The Meditation in Nature*

Go outside, perhaps to a park or a backyard or to a place where you can feel a bit surrounded by the natural world. Just allow the natural world with its beauty to affect you. Relax into it.

Know that as the natural world has an impact on you and you do not have much of an impact on it, so God is. We don’t have a large impact on God but we move within God’s world subject to God in a million different ways.

So it is with nature. Appreciate what you are seeing and hearing in Nature. Enjoy it. Don’t think too much or try to analyze anything. Experience it as much as you can in an unmediated way, in a receptive way.

Slow your pace even if this is difficult. You will probably notice things that you normally do not. Let Nature reveal itself to you, do not go looking for anything. When you have spent the time that you have, be grateful to God for this remarkable gift that is outside of you, the natural order. Humans developed within it and sometimes feel renewed after just spending a little time in it.

**Questions:**

Does it seem that God is saying something in particular to you?

Are there insights that came to you from the reading from your prayer?

Do you think God is calling you to simplify your life in some way?

Are you aware of how holy the everyday activities of life are?

Has the pandemic helped you (or forced you) to simply your life?

With a simpler life, what might you appreciate more?