

Always on Holy Ground

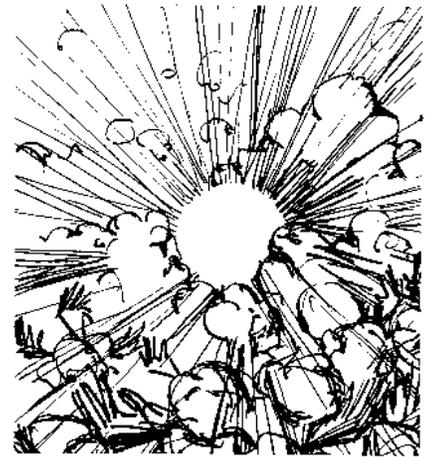
Remembering the Presence of God

Wherever I go I will find you, my God;
There is no place
That is not honored by your presence.

(JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE, from *The Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, p. 59 – adapted)

Call to Prayer

Leader: Almighty and ever-loving God, light has long been a symbol of your abiding presence. A pillar of fire traveled with the Israelites during their long journey in the desert, reminding them of your presence and protection. Moses recognized you in the bush that burned but was not consumed by the fire. Your Son Jesus proclaimed “I am the light of the world.” And today, as we light this candle, (*someone steps forward to light the candle*) we are reminded that you are with us always. In silence and in gratitude, we take a moment in silence to remember...



All: that we are in the holy presence of God.

Br. Joseph Hiep, FSC

A Reading from the Book of Exodus

(Exodus 3: 1 – 6)

Moses was looking after the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, priest of Midian. He led his flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of Yahweh appeared to him in the shape of a flame of fire, coming from the middle of a bush. Moses looked; there was the bush blazing but it was not being burned up. “I must go and look at this strange sight,” Moses said, “and see why the bush is not burnt.” Now Yahweh saw him go forward to look, and Yahweh called to him from the middle of the bush. “Moses, Moses!” he said. “Here I am,” he answered. “Come no nearer,” Yahweh said. “Take off your shoes, for the place on which you stand is holy ground. I am the God of your father,” he said, “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”

“Really Seeing” Those Entrusted to Our Care

(Ronald Rolheiser)

To “really see” someone, especially someone who looks up to you,
is to give that person an important blessing.
In a gaze of recognition, of understanding,
in an appreciative look, there is deep blessing.
Often, it is not so important
that we say much to those for whom we are significant,
but it is very important that we see them.

...Good kings and queens see their people;
good parents see their kids;
good teachers see their students;
good priests see their parishioners;
good coaches see their players;
good executives see their employees;
and, in really good restaurants,
the owner comes around to the tables and sees his or her customers
and the customers are, without being able to explain why,
grateful that the owner took the time and pain to see them.
We are blessed by being seen.

...Today the young are not being seen enough in this way.
Our youth are acting out in all kinds of ways
as a means of getting our attention.
They want to, and they need to, be seen by us –
Parents, adults, teachers, priests, coaches, leaders.
They need our blessing.
They need to see, right in our eyes, the radical acceptance of their reality,
and they need to read in our eyes the words:
“You are my beloved child; in you I am well-pleased.”
Young people need our appreciative gaze;
mostly they simply need our gaze – period.

One of the deepest hungers inside young people
is the hunger for adult connection,
the desire to be recognized, seen, by a significant adult.
They desperately need, and badly want,
the blessing that comes from our gaze and presence.
They need for us to see them.
In the end, more than they want our words, they want our gaze. . . .

A Reflection

Moses met Yahweh in a most unusual place – in a bush that was on fire but was not being consumed by the fire. It was the singular nature of this incident that drew Moses in; it was Yahweh who invited him to remove the sandals from his feet as he approached the bush, for the ground on which he stood was sacred. A powerful moment, indeed, for Moses – a transformative moment in his life. It was a moment of encounter with the divine.

In the 19th century, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, in her epic poem *Aurora Leigh*, refers this encounter between Moses and Yahweh as she expands this notion of sacred ground:

*Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God.
But only those who see take off their shoes...*

God invites us – urges us – to consider all ground sacred; to recognize the divine in every encounter with every student entrusted to our care; to remember that we are always and everywhere in God's presence. In the Book of Revelations (3:20), God says to us, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." How often has God been knocking at the doors of our hearts through the students entrusted to our care, and we have not opened the door because we failed to recognize God?

Pause For Reflection: *In the past week, where and when have you noticed the presence of God in and among those entrusted to your care?*

Closing Prayer

God of all goodness, we thank you for your abiding presence in our lives. May we have the wisdom to always be present to you, so that we may see those entrusted to us as you see them – as persons created in your image and likeness, filled with beauty and wonder and light. As we extinguish this candle (*someone blows out the candle*), we carry the light within us, so that we may be your light for the world – a world that needs your light very much. We make this prayer through your Son and our Brother, Jesus Christ. Amen.

***Saint John Baptist de La Salle...Pray for us!
Live, Jesus, in our hearts...Forever!***