

Give Thanks for God's Presence

Once you encounter God, you will no longer be the same person you were before.

Catherine de Hueck Doherty

Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.

Opening Prayer

God of the living,

Open our minds and hearts

That we may discover your kingdom within

And recognize your presence in the world around us.

Lead us to share our vision with those to whom you have sent us;

Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen

First Reading

(Archbishop Anthony Bloom)

The Gospel tells us that the kingdom of God is within us first of all. If we cannot find the kingdom of God within us, if we cannot meet God within, in the very depth of ourselves, our chances of meeting him outside ourselves are very remote. When Yuri Gagarin came back from space and made his remarkable statement that he never saw God in heaven, one of our priests in Moscow remarked, "*If you have never seen him on earth, you will never see him in heaven.*" This is also true of what I am speaking about. If we cannot find a contact with God under our own skin, as it were, in this very small world in which I am, then the chances are very slight that, even if I meet him face to face, I will recognize him. St John Chrysostom said, "*Find the door of your heart; you will discover it is the door of the kingdom of God.*"

Quiet Reflection

Second Reading

(Bede Griffiths in The Golden String)

One day during my last term at school, I walked out alone in the evening and heard the birds singing in that full chorus of song, which can only be heard at that time of year at dawn or at sunset. I remember now the shock of surprise with which the sound broke on my ears. It seemed to me that I had never heard the birds singing before, and I wondered whether they sang like this all the year round, and I had never noticed it. As I walked on, I came upon some hawthorn trees in full bloom, and again I thought that I had never seen such a sight or experienced such sweetness before. If I had been brought suddenly among the trees of the Garden of Paradise and heard a choir of angels singing, I could not have been more surprised. I came then to where the sun was setting over the playing fields. A lark rose suddenly from the ground beside the trees where I was standing and poured out its song above my head, and then sank, still singing, to its rest. Everything then grew still as the sunset faded and the veil of dusk began to cover the earth. I remember now the feeling of awe which came over me. I felt inclined to kneel on the ground, as though I had been standing in the presence of an angel; and I hardly dared to look on the face of the sky, because it seemed as though it were but a veil before the face of God.

Third Reading

(David Adam, The Cry of the Deer)

It is said that when the Celtic saints were troubled by evil or attacked by enemies, they drew the “*Caim*” (the Encircling) round them. Sometimes they actually made a circle around themselves by using a stick or their index finger. This was no magic, but an expression of the reality of the presence of God. The encompassing of any of the Three Persons of the Trinity, or all of them, might be called on. In old times, the suppliant would stretch out the right hand with the index finger extended, while turning around sunwise, as if on a pivot, and calling the desired presence to protect him. The circle was said to accompany the person on his journey and keep him from dangers...The “*Caim*” works – not as a charm – but to retune us to the reality of the love and presence of God...By calling upon Him, we tune ourselves to his being with us.

Remembering the Presence of God

Reader: Lord, with unparalleled love
You draw us into the circle of Your life.
All: **Encircle us, Lord, with Your presence.**
Reader: Bring goodness within – keep evil afar.
All: **Encircle us, Lord, with Your presence.**
Reader: Bring healing within us – keep injury without.
All: **Encircle us, Lord, with Your presence.**
Reader: Bring calm within – keep storms without.
All: **Encircle us, Lord, with Your presence.**
Reader: Bring hope within – keep despair without.
All: **Encircle us, Lord, with Your presence.**
Reader: Keep joy within – and sadness out.
All: **Encircle us, Lord, with Your presence.**
Reader: Keep light within – and darkness afar.
All: **Encircle us, Lord, with Your presence.**

Closing Prayer

Leader:
Lord of life,
 There is no part of your creation
 That does not speak
 Of the wonder of your being.
Lord or all created things,
 Let me lift up my eyes just once this day.
May the passing problems of my waking hours
 Be reduced to their proper size and place
 Beneath the infinite sky.
May I know Your presence
 Feel and breathe the breath of life
 Which is your daily gift,
 And may I see in the beauty of the heavens
 The measure of your love.
All: Amen.

***St. John Baptist de La Salle, pray for us!
Live, Jesus, in our hearts, forever!***