



fingerprints

A Habit of Praise

But when we are faithful to keep ourselves in His holy Presence, and set Him always before us, this not only hinders our offending Him, and doing anything that may displease Him, at least willfully, but it also begets in us a holy freedom, and if I may so speak, a familiarity with God, wherewith we ask, and that successfully, the graces we stand in need of. In fine, by often repeating these acts, they become habitual, and the presence of God is rendered as it were natural to us.

Brother Lawrence

THE DAY IS HOT, MUGGY, PERFECTLY MISERABLE. Tiny black flies pester me about the face and ears as I walk to the barn. The garden tractor sits in the middle of the barn floor, patiently waiting for me to bring it to life. I pour in fresh gas, filling the tank for the day's job, check the oil, top it off. In the early spring and late autumn, mowing the grass is a delight; today it will just be hot, sweaty work.

The first section I mow is the teardrop-shaped island of grass inside the driveway loop. The old apple tree still looks good. *Thank You for keeping it going this long, Father.* We'll have applesauce this year. *Thank You for the harvest.* The next section is the largest: spread across the front of the house, wrapping east, up around the flower garden, around the wedge of large

conifers, down along the drive, all the way to the gravel road. Out in the open, the sun is intense, irritating, but the blue sky is dappled with pretty cotton-puff clouds, and under my broad-brimmed hat I grin. *This is the day the Lord has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it...*

I fight the monotony of the long passes that take me from the west fence, straight east, around the curve of the drive north to the road. I want to use the time profitably—think time, planning time—but the heavy, steady drone of the engine makes organized thought a chore. Random sequences flit in and out, flip over and over repeatedly in my brain, putting me to sleep. *Help me, God. I need an idea for that new sketch. What does that church need to hear right now? Spirit, counsel me.* Moses, Moses, Moses... Burning



Reflections
by the Pond

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bush, desert, mountain, sandals, holy ground, holiness... *Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty! Early in the morning my song shall rise to Thee...*

I wonder if I'll be able to finish the mowing today—or will those clouds collect up into thunderheads and rain me out this afternoon? What a shame that would be.



With all the spring and early summer rains, the grass is growing thick and fast, making extra work. But also with the rain comes berries. Both the wild and cultivated raspberries, and the wild elderberries that grow in the ditches along the roads, appreciate wet seasons. As I pass along the fence line, the new berries are just beginning to color. Soon the thorn-armored stalks will be covered with black and red berries, and this year there will be enough to make jelly. *So many blessings, O God! You're so generous with Your blessings.* As my waistline attests—but I'll accept the responsibility for that.

As I move into the orchard to cut the scruffier grass around the fruit trees, the purple martins swoop and swirl around me, as if they were wartime dive bombers strafing my position. But I am not their target. They are dive bombing mosquitoes. *Tell me again, God, why You created mosquitoes.* But then, the thought betrays my egocentric view of the natural world, of which man is only a part. If nothing else, mosquitoes are food for many birds, bats—and certainly purple martins. *Thank You, God, for mosquitoes—I suppose.*

I pass the woodpile, near the last section, and see the flash of a chipmunk zipping from his home amidst the logs to the armored safety of the rainspout. *Lord, it was on one of Your better days that you created chipmunks,* those tiny clowns darting here and there, their cheeks bulging with nuts and seed, crouched atop the split wood piercing the stillness with their sharp, amplified chirp. *Yes, Lord, bless them. They add to my life.*

Lord God, I thank You for this place. I thank You for entrusting it to our care. Thank You for the peace we feel here—and the strong presence of Your Spirit. Please accept our

labors as a small offering of praise to You, the Maker.



The job done, I steer the tractor back to the barn, dusty, sweaty, my posterior both aching and numb from four hours riding the vibrating metal beast. I disembark bowlegged, stepping stiffly, wishing only to get out of my dirty clothes and into the shower. As I drop the barn door and head back to the house, *Father, I still need an idea for that new sketch.* Moses, Moses, Moses... mountain, mountain of God, mountaintop, hilltop, hills, hills... *The hills are alive, with the sound of music...!*

HOLY MURMURING

INEVITABLY WE COME TO THE QUESTION: WHY? So God is here, all around us. He is the Creator of everything we know, thus His fingerprints have been left behind for us to discover. So what? What are we to do with this knowledge? Or are we to do nothing with it, but just settle back into the smug satisfaction that we know something others do not?

The end-product of this realization is a habit of praise. One cannot meet God at every turn without developing—even if unintentionally—a habit of holy murmuring, a steady, reflexive vibration of communion with the Author of everything around us.

The apostle Paul counsels us to

Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

For the one who carries around the Spirit of God, the one who has been redeemed by the Son of God, it is only natural to dwell in a blessed state of unceasing communication with Father God.

