



fingerprints

A Less-specific Devotion

He converses and delights Himself with me incessantly, in a thousand and a thousand ways, and treats me in all respects as His favorite. It is thus I consider myself from time to time in His holy presence.

Brother Lawrence

LET US, FOR JUST A MOMENT, NOT GET BOGGED DOWN IN DEFINITIONS. It is true that the customary elements of our holy devotion—worship, praise, thanksgiving, prayer, service—can indeed be as different from each other as a corn muffin is from a baking powder biscuit. But, for the sake of this present discussion, let us glom them all together into a unified lump of holy communion we will refer to as “praise.”

For we speak here of a less-specific devotion, a passage of time and experiences accompanying the indefinable communion of one soul with another. We speak here of the groanings and mutterings and confidential whispers that make up a steady dialogue the faithful disciple has with his Master. This is the conversation Brother Lawrence called “an habitual, silent, and secret conversation of the soul with God.”

There is a level of communication with God the Father more akin to a humming vibration than an organized sequence of words formed into paragraphs. In this form there may be few periods, but many commas. Both fresh and well-worn pages may be recited as stream of consciousness, thoughts and images tumbling over one another in a jumble that can be translated only by the intuitive Spirit. There is, too, an even deeper, sub-word level of communication in which the Holy Spirit searches out and translates our stuttered groanings into the language of heaven. The apostle Paul mentions this mysterious dialogue in the context of the believer’s stilted attempts to cry out to God.

In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit



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is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Romans 8:26-27

Then again, this communication may be as succinct and meticulous as a shopping list, muttered in shorthand: clipped, precise—a form of dialogue common among venerable married couples, in which one half always anticipates the other, rendering complete sentences almost redundant. We are able to speak to God with the economy of shorthand, knowing that He—all-knowing, all-loving—is able to fill in the blanks from His storehouse of knowledge about us.

This I recall to my mind,
Therefore I have hope.
The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never
cease,
For His compassions never fail.
They are new every morning;
Great is Your faithfulness.

Lamentations 3:21-23



Like a kaleidoscope, with its colored bits and pieces tumbling amidst mirrors, the essential components of the Godhead never change, but reveal themselves in myriad ways, their endless variations delighting the receptive soul. With God there is no one, prescribed form of communication. He is just as attentive to the childlike gropings of the unschooled as He is to the formal liturgy of the high church. He makes Himself available to the countless personalities under His care, and, though He never becomes anything different from what He always has been, God reveals Himself to them in ways personal, and sometimes unique.

Who wouldn't rather spend time with someone well-read, experienced in living, a sparkling and attentive conversationalist—than with a dullard? We always come away from such moments enriched and rejuvenated, our senses quickened, our intellect stimulated. Just so, the more time we spend in conversation with this endlessly fascinating Companion—the author of all wisdom, creator of all chapters of life, a brilliant, empathetic conversationalist—the more we will be fed and enriched: Life to life, Soul to soul.

NOTHING BETWEEN

EVERY CHRISTIAN TODAY comes equipped with the most sophisticated, most powerful communication device ever devised, but many still conduct their lives as if they're powerless and disconnected when outside the four walls of the church building. Every one of us has been converted into a freestanding temple, but many are still operating under the idea that communion with God is either impossible or unnecessary off the church grounds.

Christians today have not learned how to find God in the banalities of daily living. They've not discovered His presence—though it is there—in the events and moments taking place around them every day. And because of this their praise falls silent, and they miss out on the power and sweet communion available to them wherever they are, whatever their activity.

"You shall hang up the veil under the clasps, and shall bring in the ark of the testimony there within the veil; and the veil shall serve for you as a partition between the holy place and the holy of holies. You shall put the mercy seat on the ark of the testimony in the holy of holies."

Exodus 26:33-34

Through Christ Jesus, God has thrown open the veil, doing away with the secrecy and cloying incense of the Most Holy Place. Through Christ, the Holy Spirit has been released to dwell in each one of us. In Christ Himself we have a steady, dependable Brother who journeys with us through *every* day—not just Sundays.

Nothing now stands between us and the Lord.



*Alone with Thee, amidst the mystic shadows,
The solemn hush of nature newly born;
Alone with Thee in breathless adoration,
In the calm dew and freshness of the morn.*

Harriet Beecher Stowe

