



1ST SATURDAY DEVOTION NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2024

A Deeper Relationship God Desires Intimacy with Us

By MARK HART
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THE EDITORS OF THE SPIRITUAL ARMY OF GOD THE FATHER'S 1ST SATURDAY NEWSLETTER ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR MAINTAINING THE CONSISTENT QUALITY AND ACCURACY OF THE SPIRITUAL ARMY OF GOD THE FATHER'S 1ST SATURDAY NEWSLETTER AND AS SUCH RESERVE THE RIGHT TO REJECT OR EDIT THE CONTENT OF ALL SUBMISSIONS FOR PUBLICATION. EDITING MAY INCLUDE, BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO, CHANGES TO GRAMMAR, SYNTAX AND STYLES, REMOVAL OF OFFENSIVE CONTENT AND REMOVAL OF PERSONAL NON-PUBLIC INFORMATION. SUBMISSION OF YOUR ARTICLE SIGNIFIES YOUR AGREEMENT TO THE TERMS AFOREMENTIONED.

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MANY OF US VIEW GOD THE FATHER AS THE "OLD TESTAMENT" GOD, FILLED WITH FURY AND WRATH, SMITING PEOPLE WITH THE TURN OF EVERY ANCIENT PAGE OF SCRIPTURE.

HE CAN SEEM LESS THE FATHER IN THE FAMILY ROOM THAN THE JUDGE IN THE COURTROOM, THE ONE WHO DOLES OUT SENTENCES THAT YOU MUST RESPECT AND CERTAINLY THE ONE YOU DO NOT WANT TO CROSS. GOD THE FATHER CAN SEEM REACTIONARY AND UNAPPROACHABLE, A DISTANT AND INACCESSIBLE "PROVIDER" WITH A FIRM HAND AND HIGH EXPECTATIONS OF OBEDIENCE AND VIRTUE.



THE DIVINE ENCOUNTER. THAT WAS CERTAINLY MY PAROCHIAL-SCHOOL PERCEPTION OF GOD THE FATHER. KNOW YOUR COMMANDMENTS. FOLLOW THE RULES. GO TO MASS. SAY YOUR PRAYERS. AVOID HELL. GOD WAS TO BE FEARED; HE WAS OFTEN SPOKEN ABOUT BUT RARELY SPOKEN TO. BUT I CAME ACROSS A VERSE THAT FLIPS THE NARRATIVE OF "ANGRY OLD TESTAMENT GOD" RIGHT ON ITS HEAD:

AND THEY HEARD THE SOUND OF THE LORD GOD WALKING IN THE GARDEN IN THE COOL OF THE DAY, AND THE MAN AND HIS WIFE HID THEMSELVES FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD GOD AMONG THE TREES OF THE GARDEN. (GENESIS 3:8, RSVCE)

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FEASTS FOR AUGUST

THE FEASTS ON THE GENERAL ROMAN CALENDAR CELEBRATED DURING THE MONTH OF AUGUST ARE:

- 1 ALPHONSUS LIGUORI, MEMORIAL
- 2 EUSEBIUS OF VERCELLI; PETER JULIAN EYMARD, OPT. MEM.
- 4 EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, SUNDAY, ALSO THE FEAST OF THE FATHER OF ALL MANKIND
- 5 DEDICATION OF ST. MARY MAJOR, OPT. MEM.
- 6 TRANSFIGURATION, FEAST
- 7 SIXTUS II AND COMPANIONS; CAJETAN, OPT. MEM.
- 8 DOMINIC, MEMORIAL
- 9 TERESA BENEDICTA OF THE CROSS, OPT. MEM.
- 10 ST. LAWRENCE, FEAST
- 11 NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, SUNDAY
- 12 JANE FRANCES DE CHANTAL, OPT. MEM.
- 13 PONTIAN AND HIPPOLYTUS, OPT. MEM.
- 14 MAXIMILIAN KOLBE, MEMORIAL
- 15 ASSUMPTION OF MARY, SOLEMNITY
- 16 STEPHEN OF HUNGARY, OPT. MEM.
- 18 TWENTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, SUNDAY
- 19 JOHN EUDES, OPT. MEM.
- 20 BERNARD, MEMORIAL
- 21 PIUS X, MEMORIAL
- 22 QUEENSHIP OF MARY, MEMORIAL
- 23 ROSE OF LIMA, OPT. MEM.
- 24 BARTHOLOMEW, APOSTLE, FEAST
- 25 TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, SUNDAY
- 27 MONICA, MEMORIAL
- 28 AUGUSTINE, MEMORIAL
- 29 PASSION OF JOHN THE BAPTIST , MEMORIAL

THE FEASTS OF ST. JOHN MARY VIANNEY (AUGUST 4), ST. CLARE (AUGUST 11), ST. LOUIS OF FRANCE (AUGUST 25), AND ST. JOSEPH CALANZ (AUGUST 25) AND FALL ON A SUNDAY SO THEY ARE SUPERSEDED BY THE SUNDAY LITURGY. □

OUR CENACLE CORNER

SEEKING A DEEPER RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD
THROUGH MEDITATION OF PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURES

*God's Love is
Encompassing*

GOD TOUCHED ME

*Publish his glorious deeds among the nations.
Tell everyone about the amazing things he does. — 1 Chronicles 16:24*

*"I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me,
just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep."
- John 10:14-15*

THY WILL BE DONE

By Evelyn Pua, a devotee

GROWING UP IN A VERY RELIGIOUS ROMAN CATHOLIC FAMILY, I CANNOT REMEMBER NOT GOING TO CHURCH. KNOWING GOD HAS ALWAYS BEEN TAUGHT TO ME IN DIFFERENT WAYS.

I WAS ONE OF THOSE WHO GREW UP ATTENDING MASS EVERY SUNDAY AND HOLY DAYS OF OBLIGATION, ATTENDING PRAYER DEVOTIONS AT CHURCH, SUCH AS OUR MOTHER OF PERPETUAL HELP NOVENA, HOLY HOUR ON THURSDAYS, FIRST FRIDAY DEVOTIONS, NOVENA TO ST. JUDE, FIESTA NOVENAS, NINE-DAY EARLY MORNING MASSES BEFORE CHRISTMAS (MISA DE GALLO), MIDNIGHT MASSES ON CHRISTMAS (MISA DE AGUINALDO) AND NEW YEAR. ARRIVING HOME AFTER A MASS, WE WOULD BE QUESTIONED ABOUT WHAT THE PRIEST'S HOMILY WAS AND IF WE COULD NOT ANSWER CORRECTLY, WE WERE TOLD TO GO BACK TO CHURCH BECAUSE WE HAVE NOT REALLY ATTENDED THE MASS. OTHERWISE, OUR MOVIE/PARTY/OUTING PRIVILEGES WOULD BE SUSPENDED.

ALL THE CHILDREN ALWAYS MADE SURE TO BE HOME AND KNEELING IN FRONT OF THE ALTAR EVERY 6:00 PM TO PRAY THE ANGELUS AND ROSARY WITH THE WHOLE FAMILY. OUR FAMILY ALWAYS PRAYED BEFORE AND AFTER MEALS. I WAS A SODALIST AND AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE SCA (STUDENT CATHOLIC ACTION). I TAUGHT CATECHISM AT PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND ALSO DURING THE WHOLE MONTH OF MAY WHEN THE CHILDREN WENT TO CHURCH FOR THE FLORES DE MAYO. WHEN I WENT TO CHURCH, I WORE A LIGHT BLUE DRESS WITH A LIGHT BLUE CORD AS A DEVOTION TO THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION. EVERY MORNING, I WOULD STOP BY THE CHURCH TO JUST SAY HELLO TO JESUS AND MOTHER MARY AND THEN GO TO SCHOOL WHICH WAS JUST ACROSS FROM THE CHURCH. I DID THE SAME VISITS AFTER SCHOOL AND BEFORE GOING HOME. I RECEIVED GOOD GRADES IN MY

RELIGION CLASS; PARTICIPATED IN CHURCH AND SCHOOL SPONSORED CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES.

IN COLLEGE, I WENT TO A UNIVERSITY LOCATED IN A MUSLIM DOMINATED CITY. THE CLOSEST CATHOLIC CHURCH WAS ABOUT 45 MINUTES AWAY AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION WAS SCARCE. YET, I MADE SURE I ATTENDED MASS EVERY SUNDAY AND ALL THE HOLY DAYS OF OBLIGATION. I PRAYED EVERY DAY AND NEVER FAILED TO SAY THE ROSARY. ALL THROUGH THESE YEARS, BECOMING A NUN WAS FOREMOST IN MY MIND, IN SPITE OF THE MANY SUITORS THAT CAME TO VISIT ME AT OUR DORMITORY EVERY VISITING HOURS ON WEEKENDS AND THE MANY "HARANAS" (A TRADITIONAL FILIPINO COURTSHIP TRADITION AND MUSIC GENRE THAT INVOLVES A MAN SINGING A LOVE SONG TO A WOMAN FROM UNDER HER WINDOW AT NIGHT) AT MY DORM'S BEDROOM WINDOW. MY LIFE WAS FAR FROM PERFECT, BUT I'VE ALWAYS MADE JESUS A PART OF IT.

I WORKED, DATED, GOT MARRIED, BORE A SON, HAD A BAD MARRIAGE, GOT SEPARATED AND REMARRIED IN CIVIL CEREMONY FIRST AND THEN IN CHURCH AFTER MY FIRST HUSBAND PASSED AWAY. WANTING TO BE A NUN BECAME A CHILDHOOD DREAM THAT NEVER CAME TO FRUITION. I STILL HAD GOD IN MY HEART BUT WAS NO LONGER AS ACTIVE AS I WAS IN MY SPIRITUAL LIFE. I WAS NOT ANGRY AT GOD, AND HAVE ACCEPTED MY LOT.

THEN, I CAME TO THE USA AND EVERYTHING WENT SMOOTHLY ACCORDING TO MY PLANS. I FOUND A PLUM JOB AND MY EMPLOYER WAS VERY COMPASSIONATE. SO I WORKED EXTRA HARD TO SHOW GRATITUDE. THIS WAS THE TIME WHEN MY SPIRITUAL LIFE TOOK A DOWNTURN. I STARTED MISSING SOME SUNDAY MASSES AND SOME HOLY DAYS OF OBLIGATION. I CAME HOME TIRED, SO PRAYER WENT TO THE BACK BURNER. THEN, I STARTED MY SOUL SEARCHING. I WENT TO DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONS, CHRISTIAN AND OTHERWISE, INCLUDING HINDUISM – JUST SEARCHING,

SEARCHING, SEARCHING... . I DID NOT GO TO CONFESSION AND FAILED TO FULFILL MY DUTIES AS A CATHOLIC.

AROUND THE YEAR 2000, MY FRIEND CALLED ME AND ASKED ME TO JOIN THE FIRST SATURDAY DEVOTIONAL PRAYERS AT THE CHURCH LOCATED IN CHINATOWN. I KEPT DODGING HER INVITATION BUT SHE WAS PERSISTENT AND NEVER GAVE UP ON ME. SO ONE FIRST SATURDAY, MY HUSBAND AND I WERE IN CHINATOWN AND BECAUSE WE WERE ALREADY THERE, WE WENT TO THE CHURCH. WE ATTENDED THE MASS AND THE PRAYERS BUT DECLINED THE INVITATION TO JOIN THE CENACLE. MY FRIEND CONTINUED TO INVITE US UNTIL, ONE FIRST SATURDAY WE HUMORED HER BY GOING TO THE CENACLE.

IT WAS THE NIGHT WHEN ST. FAUSTINA WAS CANONIZED. THERE AT THE CENACLE, A MIRACLE HAPPENED. GOD HAS TOUCHED ME AND FROM THEN ON, I WAS HOOKED. I WAS THE MAN DYING OF THIRST THAT ULTREYA COUER MENTIONED IN HER ARTICLE (SEE GOD TOUCHED ME, OCTOBER 2014 ISSUE), "...AND WHEN A MAN DYING OF THIRST FINALLY FINDS THE SPRING WITH CLEAR, FRESH, LIFE-GIVING WATER, HE DOES NOT TAKE POLITE DAINTY SIPS ONLY. WHEN HE FINALLY FINDS THAT SPRING, HE WILL DRINK HIMSELF DRUNK ON THAT LIFE-GIVING WATER. HE WILL TAKE HANDFUL AFTER HANDFUL TO HIS LIPS. HE WILL SPLASH IT ON HIS HEAD, ALL OVER HIS BODY. HE WILL IMMERSE HIMSELF INTO THAT SPRING, SO THAT HE CAN DRINK OF LIFE WITH EVERY INCH OF HIS BEING. HIS HEART WILL BE FULL OF REJOICING AND THANKSGIVING BECAUSE HE HAS BEEN RESCUED."

SCRIPTURE LESSONS I HAVE LEARNED IN MY YOUTH AND HAVE FORGOTTEN, ALL CAME BACK TO MIND. I COULD TALK ABOUT ALL MY BLESSINGS, TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS AND STILL THANK GOD FOR EVERYTHING. THROUGH MY ACTIONS AND DEEDS, MY FAITH SHONE BRIGHTLY, SO THAT MOST OF MY FRIENDS CALLED ME A RELIGIOUS FANATIC OR A CRAZY CULT MEMBER. I COULD NOT CARE LESS BECAUSE ALL I CARED FOR WAS MY LOVE FOR GOD AND NEIGHBORS. FOR MANY YEARS, I TRIED TO FIND WHAT WAS MISSING IN MY LIFE AND IT TOOK THAT ONE MIRACULOUS MOMENT TO SHAKE ME TO THE CORE.

SINCE THAT DAY, I HAVE DISCOVERED THE LIFE-CHANGING ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS IN OBEDIENCE AND HUMILITY. I'VE TRIED TO DO WHATEVER JESUS TELLS ME. I HAVE TRADED IN AND SACRIFICED MANY THINGS FOR MY FAITH IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD. LATER ON, I REALIZED THAT THOSE WERE NOT SACRIFICES BUT ALL HAD TO BE DONE TO ATTAIN GOD'S BLESSINGS. THIS PATTERN OF DESOLATION AND CONSOLATION, MADE MY FAITH EVEN STRONGER.

IN OCTOBER 2003, THROUGH THE LOCUTIONIST, GOD COMMANDED ME TO MOVE AND BRING HIS DEVOTION TO THE PEOPLE AT THE PLACE OF HIS CHOICE. IT TOOK ME ABOUT A

MONTH TO DECIDE AND FINALLY, GOD MADE HIS MOVE. THE ONCE VERY PEACEFUL AND SERENE PLACE OF MY EMPLOYMENT FOR 16 YEARS BECAME CHAOTIC TO THE POINT THAT I WANTED OUT. THE NEXT STEP WAS TO DETERMINE WHERE WE SHOULD GO. OUR TAX PREPARER MOVED TO TUCSON, AZ AND CONVINCED US TO MOVE THERE. HOWEVER, WHEN I TOLD MY FRIENDS ABOUT IT, THEY DID NOT AGREE BECAUSE SOME OF OUR FRIENDS MOVED TO LAS VEGAS. WE KEPT THINKING ABOUT IT UNTIL IN APRIL, A FRIEND (MILA LUMBA'S HUSBAND) CALLED US AND SAID HE BECAME A REALTOR AND IF WE ARE INTERESTED TO BUY A HOUSE THERE. WE, THEN, DECIDED TO MOVE TO LAS VEGAS AND WERE ALREADY PLANNING A LIFE OF FUN, UNTIL THE HOLY INFANT JESUS REMINDED US THAT OUR MOVE IS NOT TO HAVE FUN BUT TO WORK FOR GOD. HE FURTHER SAID, FIRST, YOU WILL WORK FOR YOURSELF (I INTERPRETED IT AS DURING THE WEEK); THEN, YOU WILL WORK FOR GOD (I INTERPRETED IT AS THE WEEKEND).

SO IN MAY 2004, MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND, WE WENT TO LAS VEGAS. A COUPLE AND THEIR FOUR-YEAR OLD GRANDDAUGHTER ACCOMPANIED US. AS WE WERE APPROACHING THE NEVADA LANDING, THE LITTLE GIRL CRIED OUT, "LOOK! A BABY! I ASKED HER HOW THE BABY LOOKED. SHE SAID, "WITH A HAT AND LIGHTS (AS SHE WAS GESTURING WITH HER HANDS MOVING ABOVE HER HEAD IN AN ARCH-LIKE MANNER, AND HER FINGERS WERE MOVING IN A TWINKLING WAY). WE INTERPRETED IT AS BABY JESUS WELCOMING US SINCE ONLY THE LITTLE GIRL SAW HIM.

WE DECIDED TO BUY A CONDO SINCE WE WERE USED TO COMMUNITY LIVING AND NOT DOING ANY YARD WORK. OUR REALTOR SEARCHED FOR PLACES BUT WE DID NOT LIKE WHAT WE SAW. I CALLED THE LOCUTIONIST WHO RECEIVED A MESSAGE THAT IT IS A PLACE 5 AWAY FROM A CHURCH. WE WERE PUZZLED WHAT "5 AWAY" MEANT. GIL CHECKED AND THERE WAS A LISTING CLOSE TO ST. ELIZABETH ANN SETON CHURCH. STARTING FROM THE CHURCH, WE CHECKED HOW FAR IT WAS - ON THE NORTHWEST SIDE, IT WAS 5 DEVELOPMENTS AWAY, AND ON THE SOUTHWEST SIDE, IT WAS 5 BLOCKS AWAY, AS WE STOOD OUTSIDE THE CONDO UNIT FOR SALE, WE WERE TOLD THAT WHEN THE DOOR OPENS, THERE IS A STAIRWAY LEADING TO THE UNIT. SURE ENOUGH, IT WAS THERE. WE DID NOT LIKE THE PLACE AND WE WERE AGONIZING WHETHER TO PUT AN OFFER OR NOT. THAT NIGHT, I DECIDED TO FOLLOW GOD'S CHOICE, BUT ROBERT COULD NOT BRING HIMSELF TO AGREE. THE NEXT DAY, SUNDAY, WE WENT TO CHURCH. AFTER THE MASS, ROBERT AGREED TO PUT IN AN OFFER. THE LISTING AGENT TOLD GIL THAT IT WAS ALREADY IN ESCROW. SO I CALLED THE LOCUTIONIST AND HE SAID THAT THERE IS ANOTHER ONE THAT WILL BE LISTED SOON.

A WEEK LATER, GIL CALLED US AND GAVE US THREE LISTINGS, TWO OUTSIDE THE DEVELOPMENT AND ONE INSIDE. HE TOLD ROBERT WHICH ONE WAS INSIDE BUT ROBERT DID NOT WANT TO TELL US. THE LOCUTIONIST GAVE US THE ADDRESS TO PUT AN OFFER ON, SITE UNSEEN, AND THAT EVENING, GIL TOLD US THAT OUR OFFER WAS ACCEPTED. THIS WAS NOW AROUND THE SECOND WEEK OF JUNE. WE, THEN, LISTED OUR EXISTING CONDO, SOLD IT, AND ON THE FIRST SUNDAY OF AUGUST 2004, WE HAVE MOVED IN TO OUR LAS VEGAS CONDO, ALL THESE HAPPENED IN LESS THAN TWO MONTHS.

THIS JOURNEY OF OBEDIENCE AND SAYING YES RESULTED TO THE START OF FIRST SATURDAY DEVOTION, DEVOTION TO GOD THE FATHER, AND DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART AND PRECIOUS BLOOD OF JESUS DEDICATED TO THE HOLY SOULS IN PURGATORY. IT ALSO RESULTED TO THE ACQUISITION OF ANOTHER CONDO WHICH WE NOW CALL THE CENACLE HOUSE, A PLACE FOR OUR DEVOTIONAL PRAYERS AND SPIRITUAL ACTIVITIES AND A PLACE FOR THOSE WHO SEEK SPIRITUAL AND/OR EMOTIONAL SOLACE. ALL THE ABOVE HAPPENED, TOO, WITH THE GUIDANCE OF GOD. WITHOUT HIS GUIDANCE, I WOULD HAVE GIVEN UP BECAUSE OF THE MANY CHALLENGES WE HAVE ENCOUNTERED IN DOING WHAT HE WANTED US TO DO. MANY THINK I AM THE LEADER HERE BUT I AM CERTAINLY NOT BECAUSE ALL I HAVE BEEN DOING IS FOLLOWING GOD'S DIRECTIONS. I AM A FOLLOWER, NOT A LEADER.

I TRULY BELIEVE THAT GOD COULD DO ANYTHING WITH ANYONE WHO IS WILLING. WITH GOD, NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE. TODAY, I PRAY THAT I CONTINUE TO GROW SPIRITUALLY AND I ALWAYS SEEK FOR GOD'S GUIDANCE BY FOCUSING ON MY LOVE FOR JESUS. FOCUS IS MY SPRINGBOARD FOR TAKING A SMALL STEP THAT MAY LEAD TO LEAPS OF FAITH. CHALLENGES STILL ABOUND, AND ONLY THROUGH GOD'S HELP AND GUIDANCE ARE WE ABLE TO GET THROUGH THEM. □



I am your Mother Mary.

Time has come that you my children must pray the beads of my rosary every day.

New teachings, not within the Gospel teaching of my Son Jesus, are coming out and very convenient - true to words of the false light.

My children, be very discerning of false prophets and so-called followers of God for they are coming out.

As my Son Jesus said, I am the truth and the light.

No one comes to the Father except through me.

Be focused on what he said, my children.

I will be with you to put everyone on track.

I love you, my children.

Mary, Your Lady of the Rosary

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A DEEPER RELATIONSHIP ...

IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THIS SCENE, SIN COMES TO THE GARDEN OF EDEN. THE SERPENT ENTERS THE PICTURE. ADAM AND EVE CHOOSE THEMSELVES AND ABANDON THE GOD WHO HAS LITERALLY GIVEN THEM PARADISE.

THE FRUIT JUICE IS STILL RUNNING DOWN THEIR FACES WHEN WE STUMBLE UPON THE VERSE ABOVE.

ONE OF THE DETAILS WE OFTEN MISS IS THAT GOD WAS WALKING IN THE GARDEN. DID YOU CATCH THAT? HE WAS NOT A DISTANT, COSMIC, UNAPPROACHABLE GOD WHO HAD BREATHED THE COSMOS AND SPUN THE WORLD INTO EXISTENCE FROM SOME FARAWAY AND INACCESSIBLE PLACE. NO, HE WAS SO CLOSE TO THEM THAT THEY COULD LITERALLY HEAR HIM TAKING AN EVENING STROLL ("IN THE COOL OF THE DAY") IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN. GOD THE FATHER WAS SO CLOSE THAT HIS CHILDREN NOT ONLY HEARD HIM WALKING BUT HID FROM HIM. THE CREATOR DREW NEAR, AND HIS CREATION WAS ASHAMED. AFRAID, THEY PLAYED THE WORLD'S FIRST GAME OF HIDE-AND-SEEK.

THE FATHER DESIRED INTIMACY. THE CHILDREN DESIRED ESCAPE. WE KNOW WELL THE STORY AND HOW IT ENDED. OUR PRIMORDIAL PARENTS WERE GIVEN EVERYTHING AND LOST IT ALL. WE DON'T OFTEN FOCUS ON THAT FIRST PART. YOU MAY HAVE READ IN THE BIBLE OR HEARD IN A HOMILY THAT GOD ENTERED INTO A "COVENANT" WITH ADAM AND EVE, MUCH AS HE DID WITH NOAH, ABRAHAM, MOSES, DAVID, AND OTHERS. DO WE UNDERSTAND WHAT THAT MEANS?

A COVENANT IS A TOTAL AND COMPLETE GIFT OF SELF. IN AND THROUGH A COVENANT, GOD BASICALLY SAYS, "I AM GOING TO GIVE YOU ALL OF MYSELF AND WITHHOLD NOTHING." THEN WE ARE ASKED AND INVITED TO RESPOND BY DOING THE SAME.

OF COURSE, OUR BIBLICAL ANCESTORS ALL FELL SHORT ON HOLDING UP THEIR END. IT WASN'T UNTIL JESUS CHRIST CAME IN THE FLESH AND DID WHAT WE COULD NOT DO ON OUR OWN—BECOMING THE ONCE-AND-FOR-ALL, PERFECT, AND FINAL COVENANT—THAT WE WOULD BE PUT BACK INTO RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. REMEMBER JESUS' WORDS AT THE LAST SUPPER:

NOW AS THEY WERE EATING, JESUS TOOK BREAD, AND BLESSED, AND BROKE IT, AND GAVE IT TO THE DISCIPLES AND SAID, "TAKE, EAT; THIS IS MY BODY." AND HE TOOK A CHALICE, AND WHEN HE HAD GIVEN THANKS HE GAVE IT TO THEM, SAYING, "DRINK OF IT, ALL OF YOU; FOR THIS IS MY *BLOOD OF THE COVENANT*, WHICH IS Poured out for

MANY FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS." (MATTHEW 26:26-28, RSVCE, EMPHASIS MINE)

THE EUCHARIST. AT THE LAST SUPPER—AND ON THE CROSS—JESUS LITERALLY GAVE EVERYTHING THAT HE WAS AND HAD. HE DIDN'T JUST UPHOLD OUR END OF THE COVENANT BUT EMBODIED AND BECAME THE COVENANT. JESUS HELD NOTHING BACK. HIS ENDURING PRESENCE IN THE SACRAMENTS, MOST SPECIFICALLY THE EUCHARIST, OFFERS THAT SAME SELF-GIFT AND RECKLESS ABANDON.

NOW PICTURE THE EUCHARIST. GOD MAKES HIMSELF NOT ONLY PRESENT BUT ALSO AVAILABLE—ON EVERY ALTAR AND IN EVERY TABERNACLE, IN EVERY LANGUAGE, IN ALMOST EVERY CORNER OF THE WORLD, SIMULTANEOUSLY. IS GOD THE DISTANT CREATOR WHO SPUN THE COSMOS INTO EXISTENCE AND RULES WITH AN IRON FIST FROM A FARAWAY LAND? OR IS GOD NEAR AND INTIMATE AND PRESENT, ETERNALLY AVAILABLE TO US?

THE EUCHARIST IS GOD'S WAY OF FULFILLING JESUS' PROMISE IN MATTHEW 28:20 TO BE WITH US "ALWAYS, UNTIL THE END OF THE AGE." THIS IS YET ANOTHER REASON JESUS CHRIST IS EMMANUEL, WHICH MEANS "GOD IS WITH US" (1:23). GOD IS A FATHER WHO KEEPS HIS WORD BY GIVING US ACCESS TO THE WORD, JESUS CHRIST. BY EXTENSION, THE TABERNACLE CANDLE IS THE FATHER'S WAY OF SAYING, "I'LL KEEP THE LIGHT ON FOR YOU."

GOD, IN HIS INFINITE AND PERFECT WISDOM, HAD THIS PLAN FROM THE VERY BEGINNING, WHEN HE WAS AVAILABLE TO THE SINNERS IN THE GARDEN. IF CONDEMNATION CAME TO US THROUGH WHAT WE ATE, WHY WOULDN'T SALVATION COME TO US THROUGH HEAVENLY BREAD?

WE SEE CLEARLY FROM SACRED SCRIPTURE THAT THE EUCHARIST WAS NOT A "REACTIONARY" OR "LAST-MINUTE" IDEA ON GOD'S PART. IT DIDN'T JUST "COME TO JESUS" IN THE UPPER ROOM THAT HOLY NIGHT. NO, THIS WAS GOD'S PLAN FROM THE BEGINNING: TO OFFER INTIMACY, REMAIN AVAILABLE AND ACCESSIBLE, AND TRANSFORM HIS CHILDREN FROM THE INSIDE OUT.

NEXT TIME, AS YOU STOP TO PRAY, OR HEAD TO ADORATION, PONDER OR JOURNAL ABOUT THE WAYS GOD MAKES HIS PRESENCE KNOWN TO YOU. DO YOU SEE HIM AS A LOVING FATHER OR A STRICT JUDGE? HE IS SOMEONE YOU CAN KNOW, LOVE, AND TRUST! ASK THE HOLY SPIRIT TO SHOW YOU HOW YOU CAN PUT YOURSELF IN A POSITION TO HEAR GOD MORE CLEARLY AND BE IN DEEPER RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM. □

This is an excerpt from *The Divine Encounter* by Mark Hart (The Word Among Us Press, 2022), available from bookstore.wau.org.

SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT RECOMMENDED

LIFE IS A GIFT OF GOD BODY AND SOUL

BY VICTOR H. ARANETA

WHEN LIFE IS WRITTEN IN OUR SOUL BY GOD, DO WE LIVE ON THAT PERSPECTIVE? WE THINK OUR LIVES ARE OUR OWN ALONE, THUS THE THINKING "MY BODY, MY OWN." YES, OUR BODY IS LOANED OUT BY GOD TO US BUT JUST LIKE A LOAN IT MUST BE REPAID BY GOOD DEEDS

AND RIGHT CHOICES.



BUT HOW MANY OF US REALIZE THAT? WE PROBABLY REALIZE FOR A WHILE UNTIL WE COME TO THE CROSSROAD OF DECIDING WHETHER TO END THIS LIFE OR THE LIFE OF SOMEONE FOR

CONVENIENCE. LET US ALL REALIZE THAT IN THE END GOD CREATED US IN HIS OWN IMAGE AND BREATHED THE HOLY SPIRIT OF LIFE TO OUR NOSTRILS.

PRAYER: LORD, LET ME REALIZE THAT IN ALL ASPECTS OF MY LIFE, YOU WERE THERE WATCHING ME. IF I AM PERPLEXED ON WHAT I AM GOING THROUGH WHETHER PHYSICAL OR EMOTIONAL, IN THE END, I HAVE NO RIGHT TO ABANDON MY LIFE OR SOMEONE ELSE'S LIFE YOU HAVE GIVEN AND ENTRUSTED TO ME; IN THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS, AMEN. □

Upcoming Events

1ST FRIDAY DEVOTION

AUGUST 2, 2024

IN LAS VEGAS:
THE CENACLE HOUSE
AT 2:30 PM

IN LOS ANGELES: VIA ZOOM
AT 8:30 PM
VIA ZOOM

1ST SATURDAY DEVOTION

1ST SUNDAY DEVOTION

AUGUST 3, 2024

IN LOS ANGELES:
ST. ANNE'S CHAPEL
ST. ANNE FAMILY SERVICES
155 N. OCCIDENTAL BL.
LOS ANGELES, CA 90026
DEVOTIONAL PRAYERS AT 8:30 AM
MASS AT 9:30 AM

IN LAS VEGAS:
THE CENACLE HOUSE
AT 1:00 PM

1ST SUNDAY DEVOTION

IN LAS VEGAS:
AUGUST 4, 2024
ST. SHARBEL CATHOLIC CHURCH
MASS AT 9:30 AM FOLLOWED BY
DEVOTIONAL PRAYERS AT THE CHAPEL

800 OUR FATHER DEVOTION

AUGUST 17, 2024
IN LAS VEGAS: THE CENACLE HOUSE
AT 8:00 AM

IN LOS ANGELES: VIA ZOOM
MASS AT 9:30 AM