

July 18, 2024

Daily Reflections



Center for Spiritual Development

FROM HEAVEN THE LORD LOOKS DOWN ON THE EARTH

By Sr. Bernie Inocencio, CSJ

Excerpts from Today's Readings

*"O LORD, you mete out peace to us, for **it is you who have accomplished all we have done.**"*

ISAIAH 26:12

*"The LORD looked down from the holy heights,
viewed the earth from heaven,
To **attend to the groaning** of the prisoners,
to **release those doomed** to die."*

PSALM 102:20-21

*"Jesus said: "**Come to me**, all you who labor and are burdened, **and I will give you rest.** Take my yoke upon you and **learn from me**, for I am **meek and humble of heart**; and you **will find rest for yourselves.** For my*

Reflection

I participated in an 8-day retreat three weeks ago. It was chaotic two days before the retreat. My phone was not charging properly. My car did not start; the starter had to be replaced. I did not get the car back until three hours before the retreat. My drive to Malibu from Orange was horrendous. It took me an hour and a half to drive 9.5 miles on Pacific Coast Highway. Even with all that, in the back of my mind, I knew it would be a blessed time that God saved for me.

When I arrived at the retreat house, which was atop a mountain overlooking the ocean, the staff were helpful and very welcoming, and all my stress seemed to fade away. There was a sign in the lobby saying "Shalom." When I entered my room, there was a big sunflower on the table and a welcome gift bag containing a notebook, a protein bar, a bookmark, and three pieces of chocolate. I let out a big sigh of relief as I smiled at the goodies I found. At the afternoon social and introduction, the sister who guided us through the retreat said that if we found ourselves desiring silence and solitude, we were welcome to skip any of the activities on the daily schedule. I took note of that.

The next morning, I woke up at 5 am, went to get coffee, and with the cup in my hand, I walked through the gardens of the retreat house to the bench overlooking the ocean, and waited for sunrise. As I sat on the bench, I noticed a snail on the same bench about a foot away from where I sat. I knew exactly that God was looking down from the heavens telling me to really slow down. I took that cue, and throughout the entire eight days, I took every opportunity for silence and rest while still very engaged in activities such as the morning talks and the afternoon Lectio/Visio Divina. There was daily Mass, and we celebrated the sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick. The eight days were glorious, with lots of birds singing. Those days were grace-filled.

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides (Matthew 6:33). Just like in the readings for today, God watched from the heavens and knew what I desired: rest and time alone with God. God gives peace and attends to the groanings of people who call upon and seek the Lord. God provides rest to the weary and supports those who are weighed down. We need to seek God first; we need to put our focus on God and have God always in our field of vision. The title of the retreat was "Be

Thou, My Vision.” How providential!

God desires what is best for us, and it is by God’s grace that we accomplish things. During the retreat, I felt God like a mother holding me close to her bosom. What comfort! I remembered Isaiah 66:13: “As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you.” I heard God’s heart beating, beating with love for me. I did not want to leave God’s arms. I can relate now to John who reclined on Jesus’ chest during the Last Supper (John 13:23). John must have found comfort leaning on and hearing the beating heart of Jesus. What breathtaking Grace!!! God watches us. We just need to look at God, too.



The snail beside me, Serra Retreat House
Photo by Sr. Bernie Inocencio, CSJ

For Pondering

- How do the readings resonate with you? What do you notice?
- Knowing God attends to our groanings, what emotions are stirred in you?
- What does Jesus’ invitation evoke in you? How would you respond?

For Prayer

In the Hands of God

*More than ever, I find myself in the hands of God.
This is what I have wanted all my life from my youth.*

*But now there is a difference.
The initiative is entirely with God.*

*It is indeed a profound spiritual experience
To know and feel myself so totally in God's hands.*

BY PEDRO ARRUPE, SJ

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