

February 14, 2023



Daily Reflections

JOURNEYING THROUGH CHALLENGING TIMES

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A DWELLING PLACE FOR GOD

By Sister Jeanne Fallon, CSJ

*Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will keep my word,
and my Father will love him,
and we will come to him and make our dwelling in him."*

JOHN 14:23

Reflection

The passage quoted above is the Alleluia Verse in the liturgy of today. It is taken from Jesus' Farewell Discourse during his last supper with his beloved disciples the night before he died. In John 14, we read the tender words that Jesus was speaking as he said goodbye to his disciples. He was telling them of the love the Father had for them, and he promised that Jesus and his Father would come to dwell in them. Jesus promised to always be present to those

who love him.

As I was considering Jesus' promise that he and his Father would come to make a home in the disciples who love him, I remembered the story of Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection, a Carmelite lay brother, who practiced and cultivated a consciousness of the presence of God for most of his long life. I believe he is a striking example of a follower of Jesus in whom God made a dwelling place.

Nicholas Herman was born in France in 1614 of devout Catholic parents. At age 18, he had a profound religious experience of God's grandeur and presence which never left him even though he had many struggles and anxieties in his young life. Nicholas spent a short time as a soldier in the army during the time of the Thirty Years' War. Later he was accused of being a spy, was imprisoned, and was threatened to be hanged. Nicholas explained that he had a clear conscience and was not afraid of death, so he was released back into the army. Later he was severely wounded in battle and returned to his parents' home to heal his badly injured leg. During his recuperation, he began to desire to give himself completely to God, and he imagined he was being called to live in the desert as a hermit. After living the eremitical life for a while, Nicholas discerned that the desert was not the place for him; he needed to be in a religious community. Prompted by God's grace, he went to Paris and asked to join the Carmelite monastery as a Lay Brother. At age 26, he began his novitiate and later made his first vows, taking the religious name, Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection.

As a Carmelite, Br. Lawrence suffered ten years of spiritual darkness, troubled by his former years of sinfulness, and fearful that he might not be saved. During that period, he lived only by faith. In God's mercy, he was finally released from his suffering and was blessed with a deep awareness of God's intimate presence within him that sustained him for the last forty years of his life. In the monastery, he spent fifteen years as a cook for as many as 100 friars. He was content to do any kind of humble work because he would do it for the love of God. One of Lawrence's Maxims says: "In the way of God, thoughts count for little, **love does everything**. And it is not necessary to have great things to do. I turn my little omelet in the pan for the love of God; when it is finished, if I have nothing to do, I prostrate myself on the ground and adore my God, who gave me the grace to make it, after which I arise, more content than a king." When the wound in his leg grew more painful, Lawrence was sent to the "sandal shop" for several years so he could repair the friars' sandals while sitting down. At times he was sent out to beg for alms so the friars would have food. Prayer and labor filled his days and those who spoke with him were moved by his practice of cultivating a deep presence of God in his heart.

Lawrence described his practice as “dwelling in God in quiet, familiar conversation.”

On February 12, 1691, Br. Lawrence of the Resurrection, OCD, age 77, peacefully breathed his last. After his death, the friars gathered his Spiritual Maxims and thirteen of his letters and published a classic called *The Practice of the Presence of God*, which is still available. I have personally found it very consoling to read his words written during the same century as the Sisters of St. Joseph were founded in France (1650).



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- As you reflect on John 14:23, what happens in you? Have you experienced the closeness of Jesus Christ and his Father abiding within you? Have you experienced the breath of the Holy Spirit in you?
 - Are there other passages that remind you of this wondrous gift of God's presence? For example: *"Listen, I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me"* (Rev.3: 20).
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