

Creation Paves the Way

Focus for Section #1

The “grace I seek” (my focus in this section of retreat) is as follows:

*-to see and experience You once again Lord ... afresh and anew
in the beauty of Your Creation ...*

Paul said it this way in Romans:

“ ... the basic reality of God is plain enough. Open your eyes and there it is! By taking a long and thoughtful look at what God has created, people have always been able to see what their eyes as such can't see: eternal power, for instance, and the mystery of His divine being. So nobody has a good excuse.”

Simply stated: Paul says that if you want to know about God ... if while on retreat you want to *experience Him once again, afresh and anew*, then you only have to look at His Creation!

C.L. Lewis once said it this way, “No philosophical theory which I have yet come across, is a radical improvement on the words of *Genesis*, that “*in the beginning ... **God made** ... Heaven and Earth.*”

And then Lewis made clear the fact that “Creation” is a unique quality applying **only** to God. He said,

“Creation” as applied to human authorship seems to me to be an entirely misleading term. We arranged elements He has provided. There is not a vestige of real creativity in us. Try to imagine a new primary color, a third sex, a fourth dimension, or even a monster which doesn't consist of bits of existing animals stuck together. Nothing happens.”

Often when we consider "Creation" we focus on the so-called big stuff: the sun and the moon, the galaxies, the mountains and the streams, bodies of water, animals ... and of course, people. Yet the majesty of creation shouts at us equally from the seemingly less significant.

I think that I shall never see a poem as lovely as a tree;
a tree whose hungry mouth is pressed
against the earth's sweet-flowing breast;
a tree that looks at God all day,
and lifts her leafy arms to pray;
a tree that may in summer wear
a nest of robins in her hair;
upon whose bosom snow has lain,
who intimately lives with rain.
Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.

Joyce Kilmer

Flower in the crannied wall
I pluck you out of the crannies
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand
Little flower - but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God is and man is.

Tennyson

Director's Reflection-

For me there is no better way to begin retreat than that I *meet God again* in the beauty and magnificence of His Creation. After I'm settled in ... having the retreat instructions in place ... understanding the schedule ... my personal space attended to ... I go off.

With pen and notebook in hand ... and no plans whatsoever ... I attempt to simply drift off into God's nature preserve ... quietly and most deliberately ... eyes at the ready ... moving out ...

... to wherever He would have me go
... noticing whatever He would have me notice
... observing, looking closely, *really* seeing

... doing whatever He would have me do
... imagining what He would bring to my imagination
... stopping from time to time - wherever He would have me stop - never rushing

... connecting however He would have me connect
... noting observations, reflections, questions and prayers in my journal
... taking in (and breathing in) God: all that He is and all that He is to me

... *meeting God again*

A Suggestion-

As you go you might want to reflect further upon the fact that ...

*... the majesty of creation shouts at us
equally from the seemingly less significant.*

A stone or a rock ... a weed ... a leaf ... something that catches your eye in the grasses ... a *perfect* imperfection on a tree ... the feel of the air or a breeze ... *something* in the water ... a *significant* insignificant insect ... light reflecting upon a simple image ... the feel of warmth or chill ... something nobody else has *ever* seen ...

Anything ... anything that ONLY God can create!

**So what is this all about? What does this do for me?
How does this tie into retreat?**

Let me answer that this way. I distinctly remember the first day I laid eyes on my Doris back in August, 1962. She was the most beautiful girl I'd ever met. It'd been a blind date and she was only in town for a weekend.

I determined to spend every moment I could with her those days. I just savored the look of her, relished being with her, loved hearing her talk, watching her walk, seeing her smile, learning about her life, and on and on and on.

All I wanted to do those days was enter into her life ...

*... going wherever she might want to go
... noticing whatever she might lead me to notice
... observing, looking closely, really seeing*

*... doing whatever she might want to do
... imagining whatever she would bring to my imagination
... stopping from time to time - wherever she would have
me stop - never rushing*

*... connecting however she would allow me to connect
... taking in (and breathing in) Doris: all that she was
and all that I hoped she might be to me*

And the result of all that?

I was experiencing her *afresh and anew* (in my case for the first time) based upon my *totally losing myself* in the all that was Doris those days.

And that's what we do in this Exercise: we seek to lose ourself in God.

So now ... move out ... enter in ... experience ... slowly ... deliberately.

[Note to annual/regular retreatants:

This Exercise might well seem familiar in that, in various versions, it's often been used over the past 30 years. But keep this in mind: as time passes *we age and we change*. What might have seemed "ordinary" years ago ... may well become a cause for rejoicing today and vice versa.

What we see and experience in Creation is rarely static ... God's creativity comes forth afresh (or recedes into the vestiges of our minds) over the course of our lives. As such it's more than valuable to periodically revisit all that God has done in Creation.

Most importantly, let's not lose sight of the ***purpose of this Exercise***: we want to *see and experience the Lord again ... afresh and anew ... with the intent of expressing our gratitude to Him for all that He has done for us.*]