
SEEK THE FACE OF THE LORD



Holy Week and the Easter season give us a special opportunity to seek and discover the face of the Lord. Following the death of Jesus, Mary Magdalen goes to the tomb, but the angel tells her not to look for him among the dead because he is alive. John Littleton's song, *Je cherche le visage, le visage du Seigneur* ["I seek the face, the face of the Lord"] can be with us throughout the Easter season: may it help us better discover the Crucified Jesus, the Risen Jesus, Jesus the Living One.

WANTING TO SEE JESUS

In this time of meditation on life and death, the Evangelist Saint Luke records a beautiful page of the life of Jesus at the time of his presentation in the Temple: in the light of the paschal mystery, this gesture takes on an entirely different dimension. A just and religious man named Simeon was awaiting the consolation of Israel; it had been revealed to him that he would not die before having seen the Messiah of the Lord. Led by the Spirit, he came to the Temple, and meeting Joseph and Mary carrying their new baby, he took Jesus in his arms and blessed God, saying: « *Now, Master, you can dismiss your servant in peace; you have fulfilled your word. For my eyes have witnessed your saving deed displayed for all the peoples to see: a revealing light to the Gentiles, the glory of your people.* » I greatly admire this man who desired to see God. He wanted to see him, he constantly awaited him, and he recognized him. How wonderful this is! With all the believers I cry out: « Awaken in us a thirst for God, create in us the desire of holiness. »

TO SINCERELY DESIRE IT

To find God, it is necessary to sincerely desire it. Once upon a time, a disciple went to his master and said: « Sir, I want to find God ». The master looked at the young man without saying anything and smiled at him. The young man returned every day saying that he wanted to find God. But the master knew better than him what he was asking for. One very hot day the master asked the young man to follow him to the river for a swim. The young man dove into the water. The master grabbed him and held him under by force. After the young man had struggled a bit, the master released his grip and asked what had been his greatest desire when he was in the water. « Air », the disciple answered. « Do you desire God as passionately? » the master asked. « If you want him as dearly, you will find him immediately. But if you don't have this desire and thirst for him, you can struggle with all your mind, your voice and your strength, you will not find God. As long as this thirst is not awakened as you, you are no better than an atheist. And then, the atheist is often sincere, while you are not. »

TRIGGERING ONE'S THIRST FOR GOD

« Awaken in us a desire for God, » the Church prays in the liturgy. « Deepen in us the desire for holiness ». Simeon wanted to see the Messiah of God ... he felt it in his bones, he recognized it and was ready to be with him for ever. Desire is part of who I am; it goes with another desire that comes before, God's desire for humankind to share in His happiness. God wants me to share His life in Jesus, through Jesus, with Jesus. He desires me to want His life. In my relationship with God, I must take account of my human condition which doesn't see God, which does not know who God is. Hoping in what I don't see, I await him, I place myself at His disposal and make myself receptive to receiving God's gift. I must go from many desires to one desire; I must express what my desires are, deepen them and find in the Gospels points of reference which will

enable me to recognize whether these desires are compatible with God's. I go from my desire to His desire. I must awaken in me a thirst for God. « *O God, you are my God whom I seek, my soul thirsts for you* » (Psalm 63). We must constantly nourish this thirst for God, this thirst for the absolute. Like Simeon, we must become seekers of God.

HERE I AM BEFORE YOUR FACE

On the day of my episcopal ordination, a nephew of mine gave me a song he had written; I was deeply impressed by this gesture. The words are: « *Today I stand before your face, turned towards your face, turned to you, oh my Lord, oh you my sweet Saviour! My soul thirsts for your presence, open the path before me, lead me to the living waters, come and satisfy me. My heart desires to meet you, my footsteps are ever directed toward you, I put my trust in you, grant me assurance. You are the rock that protects me from the devastation of life, I put my trust in you, your loving heart brings me comfort. Eager to cast off into deep water, I will cry 'Good News!' [to my brothers and sisters]. And better assured that you love us, I shall sing Alleluia!* »

« THE HEART OF MY HEART »

It feels good to have someone speak to us of God's desire. As a matter of fact, it is our whole life which must become God's desire. It is throughout life that we prepare to meet God, to recognize Him, to love Him more. The words of a song which I myself composed a month before being appointed bishop, could probably be a response to God's desire:

You are the life of my life, the joy of my joy,
the heart of my heart.

Oh beloved one, you seduced me and I let myself be seduced.
Oh beloved one, you drove me and I let myself be driven.

Oh beloved one, you are mine and your word is deep in my heart.
Oh beloved one, I am yours, my whole being awakes.

Oh beloved one, you live for me and your kindness overwhelms me.
Oh beloved one, I live for you, my joy is truly to love you.

Oh beloved one, you love me through the days and through the years.
Oh beloved one, I will love you in days of sorrow and days of joy.

You are the life of my life, the joy of my joy,
the heart of my heart.

Happy Easter!

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