

Making Space for God

Invocation

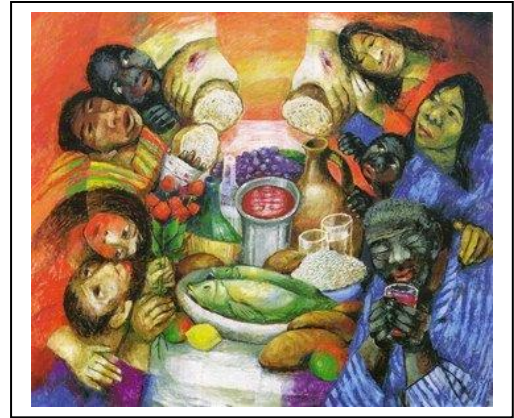
Lord, you know what is best for me. Give me what you will and when you will and as much as you will.

Do with me what you think best and as it please you and brings you the most honor.

Place me where you will and use me according to your wisdom. I am in your hand as your servant ready to do all that you command.

I want to live not for myself, but for you. I want to serve you fittingly and perfectly.

Thomas a Kempis



The Breaking of the Bread by Sieger Köder who is a German artist and priest

Arrival Take thirty minutes to settle yourself. Close your eyes, take deep breaths, and try to absorb the quiet stillness of the gardens.

- What is happening to your body today? Are you anxious, tired, restless, or sleepy? Give your body to Jesus for the day. He owns it.
- What family or ministry concerns press on your mind? Note these but don't dwell on them. Hand them to Jesus for safekeeping.
- What hopes and fears do you have as you prepare to meet with your Father in heaven? He promises to listen. He loves us like no other on earth. Ask him to be your shelter for the day.

Scripture Reading: John 6:60-68

⁶⁰On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"

⁶¹Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you? ⁶²Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! ⁶³The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. ⁶⁴Yet there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. ⁶⁵He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them."

⁶⁶From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

⁶⁷"You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve.

⁶⁸Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God." (NIV)

Questions

One of the major trials within mature discipleship is that of fidelity, of remaining steadfast and loving within our commitments over the long haul, after our initial emotional fervor has waned and some disillusionment has set in. The challenge then will be to act out of value rather than out of feeling and to act out of trust rather than out of understanding. An example of this from the

Gospels is the invitation to Peter to remain committed to Christ in the face of major questions and a major disillusionment in John 6

1. Read John 6:35-59 to understand the context of his disciples questions in John 6:60-69. What do the crowds and the disciples think Jesus was proposing?
2. Who do you know who has turned away from Jesus after initially following him for a time? What were their reasons for distancing themselves for God or his people?
3. When have you felt like walking away from God and why? What made you stay?
4. Look at Peter's response in John 6:68-69. Paraphrase his answer in words that make sense to you.
5. Take some time to tell Jesus the things that bother you. Tell him as well of the things for which you are thankful.

Reading for Reflection:

In his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, C. S. Lewis recounts the night when he, as an adult convert to Christianity, first knelt down and admitted to himself and confessed to God his faith in Christ. He knelt down, he writes, not with enthusiasm, with a heart and mind bubbling with emotion. He knelt down, rather, "as the most dejected and reluctant convert in all of England." And one might ask, given that reluctance, why he would ever choose to kneel? He knelt down because, to quote his own words, he had come to realize that "the hardness of God is kinder than the softness of men, and His compulsion is our liberation." That is the same reason why Peter chose to remain with Jesus even after Jesus' words confused and upset him... He had an intuitive sense, rooted in something deeper than thought or feeling, of what he needed to do to find and sustain authentic life within himself... During the long years of maturity when boredom, the longing for a second honeymoon, midlife crisis, misunderstanding, disillusionment, and numerous other things eat away at our fidelity like rust on iron, we find ourselves, on any given day, standing like Peter before Jesus, with every reason of head and heart to walk away, but knowing at a deeper place inside of us that, for us, real life depends upon staying the course. When we honor that deeper place inside us, real life will flow into us.

Ronald Rolheiser in Sacred Fire: A Vision for a Deeper Human and Christian Maturity

William James, the American psychologist, used to give this advice: 'Do every day something you don't like doing for no other reason than that you don't like doing it.' He likened this exhilarating practice to the regular payment of insurance premiums. The small regular payments which you can afford without difficulty give you the sense of security resulting from the knowledge that, in the unfortunate event of fire, you are covered. In a similar way the regular acts of self denial build up reserves of strength with which to meet the great crisis when they come. The ability to say 'no' to inclination is part and parcel of the power to say 'yes' to opportunity when it knocks.

Christopher Bryant in *The Heart in Pilgrimage* page 108

Benediction- *Lord you have set your servant free to go in peace as you have promised; for my eyes have seen the Savior whom you have prepared for all the world to see: a Light to enlighten the nations, and the glory of your people Israel. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen*