

Reflection for 6th Sunday of Easter Year B

We seemed to have experienced four seasons in one day recently from hailstones in the morning to a bright summer warm evening. It is hard to make sense of everything, as we continue to feel the impact of the pandemic in our lives. There are also countries where the Virus is totally out of control. Few of us would have expected to have seen pictures of snow which had fallen heavily in parts of Scotland at the start of May. We may feel a bit confused by all this, as it all appears a little strange. We could feel the same about prayer. As people of faith, we can find prayer a bit of a struggle. All too often, we are content to say or recite prayers. The challenge, however, is to make time for prayer. What does prayer involve? Sometimes, we can have some crazy ideas about prayer that can be a bit dangerous if we are not careful. Put simply, prayer is about our conversation with God, with whom we can talk and, hopefully, listen to as well. The danger, for us, is that prayer can become a monologue when we do all the talking and none of the listening. If we can listen to God, then we need to be silent. Silence is not something that comes easily to us. It makes us uncomfortable. Some of the most powerful encounters with God are often found in silence. The encounter with silence often speaks a thousand words. We might want to find a guidebook or a strategy that would outline a map to a life of prayer. We would hope it would make our life of prayer that bit easier. The chances are that we need a route map to prayer in our daily lives. The crossroads of faith can bring experience and encounter together in a life of prayer. Therefore, we should take some encouragement from these words of Fr. Mark Thibodeaux, a Jesuit priest who has written on prayer and how we might be able to apply it in our daily lives regardless of our circumstances or our life of faith.

“One of the greatest mystics of all time, St. Ignatius of Loyola, believed that the prayer exercise called the “Examen” should be the most important quarter-of-an-hour of a person’s day, and yet today most Christians have never even heard of it. Why is the Examen so valuable? St. Paul exhorts us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). I’ve learned that the closer I get to Christ, the more I really long to be with him always. It’s not that I desire to be kneeling in a church or sitting in a comfy prayer-chair all day. I love the buzz of my life – the endeavour of human activity – too much to be sitting in contemplation all the time. No, what I long for is to have Christ join me in all the adventures and tedium of my active day. I love Christ so much that I want to share every minute of it with him.

My faith tells me that God is everywhere at all times, and that Christ is in my heart and embedded in all of creation - regardless of how conscious I am of his presence at any given moment. That’s wonderfully consoling, but I want more! I want to feel his presence all the time. I want to feel him not only when I leave the nitty-gritty of my life and go to Church; I want to feel his presence always! And I want to share with him even the smallest details of my life; the irritating email I just received and the pleasant smile of the woman at the post office; the dread in my heart for the difficult meeting I’m about to step into and also the delight of biting into that perfectly sweet and crunchy apple during my break. I want to talk to Christ about the stupid thing I just said to my boss and also the little victory I had in getting that boring multiday task completed. Sure, I want to share with Christ the really big things: my grave sins and my overwhelming consolations, and I will share those big things during my meditation and when I go to Mass or confession. But the closer I grow to Christ, the more I want to share with him the seemingly insignificant changes as well. I know that he’s there, in the midst of it all, and I long to tap into his presence right there in the mud and muck, the pencils and French fries of my uncomplicated yet incredibly ordinary life. This is why the Examen is so awesome and powerful. It brings my nitty-gritty to God and God to my nitty-gritty.”

Mark E. Thibodeaux, s.j, **“Reimagining the Ignatian Examen,”** pages vii/viii.

Would you like to make a daily ‘Examen’? You can download the [“Reimagining the Examen App”](#) for iPhone and Android [HERE](#)