

The Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 21, 2011

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To Be: In God's Presence

"You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures for evermore." Psalm 16:11

Good Morning! Sitting outside looking up in the sky on a starry clear night I **know** I am in the Presence of God and without saying a word, in the silence is **"to Be"**. When I am sitting with a patient at the end of their life and they can not speak or respond, I **know** I am in the Presence of God and without saying a word, in the silence is **"to Be"**!

What does it mean **"To Be"**. The dictionary describes "To Be": as a verb. "To Be" is said to be the most 'multifaceted words in the English language, constantly changing form, sometimes without much of a discernible pattern'. This is how I feel sometimes when I am asked just "to Be: in the presence of God", a time that is constantly changing form.

I may "just be in God's presence" quietly sitting under the stars or "just be in God's presence" listening to music and acting silly with my family in the living room at the end of a busy day... .

Psalm 46:10 states "Be still and know that I am God". In his book, **Living Buddha, Living Christ**; Thich Nhat Hanh states that "'Be still' means to become peaceful and concentrated, and 'to Know' means to acquire wisdom, insight or understanding". To be able to understand what it is to be in Gods Presence, or live in the reality of God's Presence you must first know where God is. So, Where is God?

Many would answer; God is in "The Church," but David tells us in Psalm 139:7-12 that "God is everywhere all at once" God is in you, He is in me. He is a part of every living creature and every living thing. He is with you all the time, everywhere you go. This may sound very Buddhist, but this is what we learn in our own faith from the psalms.

When I decided to talk about **Being in God's Presence**, I thought it was going to be a very easy topic to talk about but as I began to write this meditation, I struggled because I have realized that with my busy life I have not allowed myself to just take the time and **Be in God's Presence**. How can I talk about something I haven't been able to do myself? So I just sat in my dining room looking at an empty computer screen and decided to close my eyes and take that time To Be and wait for God's Presence to come upon me. This did not happen. My mind kept wandering to the dust bunnies in the corner or to the pile of papers that needed to be sorted through. This is a world of fast paced lifestyles and instant messages, it is a world full of tragedy, pain and news of wars and stock markets and gas prices. But it is also a world of

joy and love. A world full of beautiful creations, a world of Love and Hope. God **is** Present in both of these worlds.

So, I took out my journal from a few years ago and found the poem called Deep Breathing, a poem that was given to me from a member of a grief support group I facilitated when I was a Parish Nurse. You all have a copy of it in your bulletins this morning. I sat and read this poem as I read it now:

Deep breathing

How often during the day my mind and body need refreshment.

At these times I stop, become very still, and take a God break.

I breathe in God

and breathe out irritation;

I breathe in God

and breathe out frustration;

I breathe in God

and breathe out limitation.

My whole being responds.

I am renewed, restored, revitalized.

I am ready to begin again!

I was then able to sit in front of my computer screen and ready to **Be Still and to find God's Presence.**

When people find out that I Work in Hospice as a nurse and spiritual care coordinator I often hear “ Oh, That must be hard..” How can you sit with a dying person...then they begin to tell me how they are uncomfortable with people who may be unresponsive, have dementia or being with those who are dying. They say they become anxious and don't know how to act or how “to be”. Many say it is hard for them to just sit in silence and to Be in God's Presence.

What are your experiences of God's Presence? What does God's Presence feel like and how is it for you to be in God's Presence? Think of a time when it felt very awkward in the silence and you didn't know how to just be still and quiet. When we have had our Vespers services here at Faith there is a time of silence. I often would sit in the silence and hear the uncomfortable feelings of others trying just to be silent. I would hear the movement of legs, or the wrinkling of the paper in their hands. In this fast paced world of ours we have forgotten how to be silent and to listen to God speak to us in the stillness and let our minds go blank of the day's business and to just allow ourselves to Be in God's Presence.

It is easier to recognize God's Presence when things are going well for us. When everything seems to be in our favor and life is just wonderful. We have fallen in love and we have found that wonderful home or that perfect car. We got into the school of our choice or landed that great job. But where is God when things begin to fall apart and our world feels like it is turned upside down?

Yes, it is a world of tragedy and pain, but it is also a world of joy and love. God is present in both of these worlds. In our times of pain and sorrow we can find God's loving Presence in the loving acts of those around us who are there with us. We can also find God's Presence in the message of Hope. Hope in the Love and Faith we have in Jesus Christ. Christ came to bring us that message of Hope. He shared this with his disciples and taught them to "Love one another as I have Loved you. Love your neighbor as yourself". With this commandment we can find that Love and experience God's Presence in our lives.

At times God's Presence can be as quiet as a whisper but other times it can be as loud as a freight train. Sometimes ***To Be in God's Presence*** is like a roller coaster ride and then other times it is like a peaceful sleep. At times it is like the psalmists singing with joy or being overwhelmed with God's grace and glory that one can't speak at all. Psalm 16:11 states "*You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures for evermore*". When we are In God's Presence we are in an joyful intimate relationship with God.

Many of us have probably been in the presence of a person of positive, uplifting attitudes, one who is confident, gentle, and kind. Other times we have been in the presence of someone who is not fun to be around, one who is full of anger, or complains all the time. How do we feel in either situation? We tend to respond to the other person's attitudes or behaviors and we tend to be drawn to the people who are kind and uplifting. We want to be with those who show God's Loving, Joyful Presence don't we? We don't want to be around someone who is crabby and mean all the time.

Look for God's Presence in the person who sits next to you in church or the one who listens to you when you need to vent and pour out your troubles with not only their ears but with their hearts wide open. Look for God's Presence in the growth and the peace that comes to us after we have been through the darkest of valleys, the saddest of times.. Look for God's Presence in the laughter of our youth and the joy in their simple thoughts of life. Look for God's Presence in the cashier who smiled at you at the checkout, in that unexpected note from a friend, in the scriptures we hear at church or in the hymns that we sing.

I find God's Presence in my patients who share with me the stories of their younger days and the memories they have shared with their loved ones. I find God's Presence in those patients who are close to the end of their lives and the burdens of the uncontrollable ways of life no longer matter. The only thing that matters at that time for them is the PRESENCE of GOD. I find God's Presence watching the birds soaring above my backyard or in the smells of the lilacs in the spring or the sounds of the tree frogs in the summer evenings and the first fallen snow of winter. I find God's Presence in the smiles of my loved ones when they are having a good day and even in the tears when they are not having a good day but they know that God is with them.

Look for God in prayer, in relations with others by sharing an evening out at the movies or a meal with a friend, reading a book and discussing it after, in the tears, the hugs, the laughter and the comfort that others bring in our times of sorrow or in our times of joy.. The benefits of being in God's Presence are overwhelming... And Endless. We just need to take the time and recognize them as GOD!

Sometimes trying to make sense out of God becomes too much. I was struggling to put this into words when I was writing this meditation and I was reminded that sometimes we can not put God into words. We just need to try to bring God into our life on a daily basis. We need to be decided to allow His Presence to be within us and we **will** feel His Love within. God wants us to know that He desires to be with us. .

The reality is that **we** are never without God in **our** presence. Psalm 139 states *"Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast."* We are never without God in our Presence.

To find God's Presence stop and sit in the quiet of His Presence, give thanks to God for whatever it is you are doing today. Change the word "**have**" to "**get**". I **have** to pick up the kids after work, to I **get** to pick up the kids after work. God gives us the gift of life while we are on this earth, so embrace that gift and share that gift and enjoy that gift of life! We are here for a short time and let us be glad and enjoy it. Enjoy time spent with others and enjoy time spent by yourself with God. Share God's Presence with those around you! Share your faith with others!

Let us now pray in silent prayer and thank God for His Presence in our lives.

Let us pray: Loving God come into this place of Worship and share your Presence with us today in our silence.....

Silent Prayer Time

And Be with us in our Praise : **AMEN!**