



Fifth Week of Lent- 3/24- Jurrell Sison

“Growing with God” Meditation 5: Scripture as a Thin Place

By Jurrell Sison

We should be aware of the thin places in our lives because they make experiences of God’s desire for each one of us, and our desire for God, more possible by capturing our attention and pulling us out of our ordinary routines and concerns. Scripture, either heard or read, can be a thin place if we let the words capture our imagination and attention. Scripture will not be a thin place if we read it solely for meaning. All too often, we do not let the Scriptures do what they were written to do—namely, to give the Mystery we call God a chance to be heard and met.

Loving God help me encounter you in the way the biblical writers intended: to engage you personally, to hear you, and to meet you in the Mystery of Scripture. —**William A. Barry, SJ, in *Lenten Meditations: Growing in Friendship with God***

Working as a Catholic youth minister and teacher, it’s often that I find myself numb to the daily prayer that needs to happen throughout the day. On a typical day we pray before, after, and sometimes during the classes and programs I run. Facilitating prayer is a foundational part of my life, and I’ve learned that if I’m not careful, prayer easily becomes another task to endure. This hit me hard when I came across Fr. Barry’s challenge to be aware of the “thin places” in our lives.

However, rather than asking where the “thin places” were, I found myself asking the opposite: what were the “thick places” in my life? What parts of my day were so clouded with stress that I was blinded by the great mystery of God present all around me? Moreover, what walls have I built that block me from experiencing the sacredness in life?

Barry’s idea that the thin places pull us “out of our ordinary routines and concerns,” resonated with me. When I took this line to prayer, I realized how often I create a thickness that prevents me from encountering God. Maybe this is the “ordinary routine” from which God desires to save me. With so many tasks to complete, I routinely put up walls that only get thicker until prayer becomes just another task. But ironically, prayer is a time to knock down the walls. If the walls are up, our time with the Scriptures becomes void; we transform the living Word of God into a cliché.

The writers of the Bible are passionate and moving when they exclaim: “Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12) It is as if these writers of the past were begging us to listen to God’s Word wholeheartedly—because it’s more exciting, heart-throbbing, bone-chilling, and exhilarating than any Hollywood film.

Since I am human—with many projects on my plate—it's often that I forget this. I forget that prayer itself—especially praying with Scripture—is the remedy for the thickness I create and that maybe, if I prayed first to take the walls down, it would lead me to a thin place where I could experience a God whose Word is sharp enough to penetrate the toughest walls around my heart. Lord, help me to take down my walls and to be deeply aware of your living Word.