Epiphany Reflection Seven

“God lives and works in the spaces between us, spaces we imagine are empty but are really crackling with connective energy.”¹

This seventh and final reflection in the Epiphany series will look at how God is made manifest through our relationships, “those spaces between us.” Each of us has been created in God’s image and just as God is revealed through nature and music, God is revealed through our human connections. This reflection offers a practice of looking back on the interactions of our day to notice where God was present and where God seemed hidden. By examining our relationships with other people, we can discover more and more about our relationship with God.

The reflection which follows is derived from the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits. Ignatian spirituality is based on the understanding that God can be found in all things. In a form of prayer called The Examen, Ignatius invites us to a regular examination of our day. This may be done as often as three times a day, morning, noon and night. It may be more practical to begin the practice once a day. Frequently, it is done in the evening.

Epiphany Practice Seven

Opening Reflection

Offer a prayer which brings you to the awareness of the presence of God. Offer your intentions for this time of prayer. To help you prepare, an offering is included below.

THE FIRST PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION

The goal of our life is to live with God forever.
God, who loves us, gave us life.
Our own response of love allows God’s life to flow into us without limit.

All the things in this world are gifts of God, presented to us so that we can know God more easily and make a return of love more readily.

As a result, we appreciate and use all these gifts of God insofar as they help us develop as loving persons. But if any of these gifts become the center of our lives, they displace God and so hinder our growth toward our goal.

In everyday life, then, we must hold ourselves in balance before all of these created gifts insofar as we have a choice and are not bound by some obligation. We should not fix our desires on health or sickness, wealth or poverty, success or failure, a long life or short one. For everything has the potential of calling forth in us a deeper response to our life in God.

Our only desire and our one choice should be this: I want and I choose what better leads to God’s deepening his life in me.

--St. Ignatius of Loyola as paraphrased by David L. Fleming, SJ

• Take time to thank God for the things that were part of the past 24 hours. What were the accomplishments, affirmations, challenges, new awarenesses, shortcomings?
• Offer a prayer that the day’s gifts may reveal a further gift of how you are becoming more fully alive to God.
• Reflect on how your actions, thoughts and desires, over the last 24 hours, might teach you about your relationship to God, yourself and others. Is there a particular incident that stands out from the day?
• Spend some time with this event. Does it bring you closer to God or further away? Is it filled with the love of God? Fear? Hope? Faith? Doubt?
• If no one action, thought or desire stands out does a pattern of behavior appear? What does this pattern tell you about your belief in God?
• Bring what you have learned to prayer, offering to God those things that have been revealed about God, yourself, others, your life, your hopes. Seek God’s help in living into this new awareness.
• Finally, offer a prayer of gratitude and openness to God the Creator, placing your trust in God’s love and mercy.

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Resources

Brakeman, Lyn, *The God Between Us: A Spirituality of Relationships*, (Innisfree Press, Inc., 2001) Lyn Brakeman uses the relationships found in the stories of Scripture to look at healing relationships. She uses midrash, the ancient Jewish practice of interpretive storytelling, to investigate the presence of God between six different individuals from the Bible, including Adam and Eve, David and Jonathan, Mary and Jesus. Each chapter includes reflection questions.

Harter, Michael, SJ, editor, *Hearts of Fire: Praying with Jesuits*, (Loyola Press, Chicago, 2004), This book is a collection of prayers written by Jesuits through the ages and is a great resource for learning more about the Spiritual Exercises or simply finding a great prayer.

http://sacredspace.ie/ Sacred Space, a web site run by the Irish Jesuits, offers a version of online daily prayer.

http://www.other6.com/ Other6, a web site run by Loyola Press, invites you to post in 140 characters where you find God today and where you need to find God today.

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