

Talking with Jesus

Eugene Ionesco wrote a play called *The Bald Soprano*. In one scene a man and a woman are seated in a waiting room of an office. They appear to be total strangers. After sitting there for a while in total silence, the man decides to strike up a conversation progresses awkwardly; the audience discovers that some remarkable coincidences link the lives of these two apparent strangers. Both were born in Manchester, England. Both have one child, named Alice. Both now live in London on Bromfield Street. Both live on the fifth floor of the same apartment building. And here's where the audience gets the big surprise. Both live in the same apartment. When the shock and humor of the situation subsides, Ionesco's point emerges. The married couple in the waiting room really doesn't know each other. They live together, but they don't know each other deep down. They are, in a very real sense, strangers.

What is true of the couple in the waiting room is sometimes unfortunately true of you and me. Sometimes you and I are like the man and the woman. Our relationship with Jesus is at times largely on the surface. We really don't know Jesus as deeply as we might. Outwardly, like me and you, many Catholics appear to be committed to Jesus. They wear a gold cross around their necks. They go to church on Sunday, and they obey the commandments. But deep down inside, they really don't know Jesus. Why is this the case? Why don't they know Jesus better? Why don't they relate to him more personally? For instance, why don't they relate to Jesus the way Jesus himself related to his Father?

One reason is that they don't do what Jesus does in the gospel. They don't take time to communicate with Jesus the way Jesus communicated with his heavenly Father. To put it in another way, you and I, like others, don't take the time to pray, as we find Jesus doing in the gospel. We read of Jesus: "Rising early ... he left and went off to a lonely place here he prayed."

Fr. Mark Link in this homily asks us to take a closer look at prayer and what it involves. He tells of a student, who as part of a homework assignment wrote this: "One day after playing in the park, I went to a nearby fountain for some water. The cool water tasted so good, and I felt refreshment enter my tired body. "Suddenly, I began to think, 'We need water to drink. But where does water come from?'

'Clouds!' I thought. 'But where do clouds come from?' 'Vaporized moisture.' This went on until I got no answer, or rather, until I was left with just one answer: God! For the next couple of minutes, I just lay on the grass looking up into the sky, marveling at what God must be like. Then I talked to God for a little bit in my own words. After that I went home. That young person's experience illustrates several forms that prayer to Jesus can take: let's look at meditation and conversational prayer.

A good name for meditation is mind praying. We simply do what the student did. We think about some idea.

For example, we think about Jesus and what he must have been like. In other words,

meditation is simply taking some idea and exploring it prayerfully with the mind. This brings us to the second form that prayer to Jesus can take: conversation. A good name for conversation is heart praying. We simply converse with Jesus from the heart, the way the student did. We converse with Jesus the way we would converse with a good friend. In other words, conversation is simply conversing with Jesus prayerfully from the heart.

Let's close with a story: Shortly before Fr. Dan Lord, the great leader of youth, died of cancer, a young person asked him for advice on how to pray. Fr. Lord said to the young person: "Keep it simple. Pray to God as your Father, to Jesus as your brother, and to the Holy Spirit as your constant companion." And we might add, pray to them the way Jesus invited us to love: with our whole mind, our whole heart, and our whole soul.

When you take time to think about God and to talk with Jesus, you will know that...

YOU ARE LOVED,

Deacon Dan

*Stories by Fr. Mark Link