

LC RETREAT MARCH 2017
LIVING IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

**Reflection IV:
BECOMING ONE WITH ABBA**

Mary, in Her Humility, Proclaims the Greatness of the Lord,

–Path, Message 20 (pgs 66-67)

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord.” My little one, these are the words from the mouth of My Mother as she enters the home of Elizabeth. Ponder these words with Me. My Mother lived her life in praise of the Father. She lived in the constant awareness of who the Father is. Her soul was in a constant state of awe.

At the moment of the Incarnation, My human and divine Heart was fused as ONE with My Mother's and was consumed in the fire of love of the Holy Spirit. Together we proclaim the greatness of the Father.

In the knowledge of the greatness and majesty of God, Mary also had perfect knowledge of herself; therefore, she states that she is the handmaid of the Lord.

My daughter, I desire that you live more profoundly and perfectly in the knowledge of the grandeur, majesty and goodness of Abba, our Father. In this way, you will live more perfectly as My handmaid. The perfect and holy handmaid of the Lord, Mary Most Holy, is moved by the Holy Spirit to serve her cousin, Elizabeth.

- Isaiah 49:1,3 – The Lord called us “from the womb” to be his “servants” that “glorify him.” (The LORD called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named me. 3 And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.")

Do you understand, My little one, the direct correlation with the Mothers of the Cross? The Spirit of God moves the pure and humble of heart to serve as handmaids their brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, in the awareness of who God is, in order to become the handmaids of God. The true knowledge of God will always move a soul to serve in pure humility. You are the handmaids of the Lord; serve one another in the awareness of the immensity of God's love. (09/18/11)

- Abandonment to the Holy Spirit is not that we work, serve, to earn, to gain, God, but rather, our service flows naturally from our relationship with Abba. The first is the relationship of a slave, the second is the relationship of a son/daughter.

Fr. Ascencio:

- Our faith is when the knowledge of Christ becomes our own, and his love is our love which palpitates in our hearts.
- Faith has a context, which is the knowledge a son has of his father. Being a son is the necessary context of faith. Only with a heart of a son can we believe. being sons in Jesus. “This is my beloved son in whom I am pleased.” Jesus believes these words from His Father, “this is who I am.”
- To have faith, believe, we too must be in this relationship with the Father as son in Jesus.
- Faith has an objective – to know the Father, but a relational knowledge not theoretical. For example, one thing is to know somebody, and another is to be familiar with a person-- able to enter a relationship with the Father: to touch him, call upon him, and appreciate him...
- **Ephesians 2:17,18** “He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.”
- **Romans 8:15** “For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, “Abba, Father!”
 - A Slave is someone who does not have a personal relationship with his owner. You have a master that when you do not do what you were told, you get punished. When there is fear, not peace, you still have the spirit of slavery and not of a son. “Abba Father”
 - What do you believe in the depth of your heart? That I’m alone; that nobody is with me giving me life, strength, love? Spirit of a slave
 - Or do I trust and feel supported, guided, loved, sustained, forgiven, I’m not alone, I’m a son. Then I have trust and the dialogue immediately opens, “Abbe, Father!”

Who is the Father? Have we come to know Him personally? Do we live in a constant state of awe and praise because we truly know Him? Through this reflection, Abba wants to bring us to know Him more intimately. He wants to draw us to Himself, to enter His embrace.

The Return of the Prodigal Son – Henri Nouwen

The hands that touch the back of the returning son are the instruments of the father's inner eye. The near blind father sees far and wide. His seeing is an eternal seeing, A seeing that reaches out to all of humanity. It is a seeing that understands the lostness of women and men of all times and places, that knows with immense compassion the suffering of those who have chosen to leave home, that cried oceans of tears as they got caught in anguish and agony. The heart of the father burns with an immense desire to bring his children home.

But his love is too great to do any of that. It cannot force, constrain, push, or pull. It offers the freedom to reject that love or to love in return. It is precisely the immensity of the divine love that is the source of the divine suffering. God, creator of heaven and earth, has chosen to be, first and foremost, A Father. That freedom includes the possibility of their leaving home, going to a "distant country," and losing everything.

As Father, the only authority he claims for himself is the authority of compassion. That authority comes from letting the sins of all his children pierce his heart. There is no lust, greed, anger, resentment, jealousy, or vengeance in his lost children that has not caused immense grief to his heart. The grief is so deep because the heart is so pure. From the deep inner place where love embraces all human grief, the Father reaches out to his children. The touch of his hands, radiating inner light, seeks only to heal. The Father wants simply to let them know that the love they have searched for in such distorted ways has been, is, and always will be there for them. The Father wants to say, more with his hands than with his mouth: "You are my Beloved, on you my favor rests." He is the shepherd, "feeding his flock, gathering lambs in his arms, holding them against his breast."

The true center of Rembrandt's painting is the hands of the father. In them mercy becomes flesh; upon them forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing come together, and, through them, not only the tired son, but also the worn-out father find their rest.

The two are quite different. The Father's left hand touching the son's shoulder is strong and muscular. The fingers are spread out and cover a large part of the prodigal son's shoulder and back. That hand seems not only to touch, but, with its strength, also to hold. Even though there is a gentleness in the way the Father's left hand touches his son, it is not without a firm grip.

How different is the father's right hand. This hand does not hold or grasp. It is refined, soft, and very tender. The fingers are close to each other and they have an

elegant quality. It lies gently upon the son's shoulder. It wants to caress, to stroke, and to offer consolation and comfort. It is a mother's hand.

The father is not simply a great patriarch. He is, indeed, God, in whom both manhood and womanhood, fatherhood and motherhood, are fully present. That gentle caressing right hand echoes for me the words of the prophet Isaiah: "Can a woman forget her baby at the breast, feel no pity for the child she has borne? Even if these were to forget, I shall not forget you. Look, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands."

The great red cloak: The sheltering wings of the mother bird. They reminded me of Jesus's words about God's maternal love: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem... how often have I longed to gather your children, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you refused!" Day and night God holds me safe, as a hen holds her chicks secure under her wings. The image of the vigilant mother bird's wings expresses the safety that God offers her children. They express care, protection, a place to rest and feel safe.

"You who dwell in the shelter of the Most High and abide in the shade of the Almighty - say to your God: my refuge, my stronghold, my God in whom I trust! You conceal me with your pinions and under your wings I shall find refuge." Psalm

Thus the return of the prodigal son becomes the return to God's womb, the return to the very origins of being and again echoes Jesus' exhortation to Nicodemus, to be reborn from above. The near blind eyes, the hands, the cloak, the bent over body, they all call forth the divine love, marked by grief, desire, hope, and endless waiting.

PATH #49,

The love of God is the Eucharist and is transmitted through the Eucharist.

I am humble, pure, simple, silent, generous, forgiving, merciful, patient, and tender. I give Myself fully to the good and the bad, to the deserving and the undeserving, to those who love Me and to those that persecute Me. I continue to love those who do not love Me. I continue to love those who use Me. I continue to love the unfaithful. I continue to love those indifferent to My love. I am left alone in the Tabernacles of the world with few who come to be with Me, to adore Me and to give Me thanks. I cry but My tears are hidden. I intercede continuously before the throne of our Father for all.

Path #50

I remained with you(in the Eucharist) to nourish your life with Divine life; To prepare you, to strengthen you and to become one with you as you journey

the path to eternal life in God. I remain in this hidden and ordinary way so that your hidden and ordinary life can be transformed into Divinity and thus participate here on earth in the unity and Divine life of the Most Holy Trinity. The Eucharist is the life of God that has the power to heal and to transform you from within. In the smallness of the Host is revealed the grandeur, majesty and greatness of God. The Eucharist is the greatest miracle of God for humanity. The Eucharist reveals God's faithfulness to His people.

Here lies hidden the great call to conversion: to look not with the eyes of my own low self esteem, but with the **eyes of God's love**. As long as I keep looking at God as the land owner, as a father who wants to get the most out of me for the least cost, I cannot but become jealous, bitter, and resentful toward my fellow workers or my brothers and sisters. But if I am able to look at the world with the eyes of God's love and discover that God's vision is not that of a stereotypical landowner or patriarch but rather that of an all giving and forgiving father who does not measure out his love to his children according to how well they behave, then I quickly see that my only true response can be **deep gratitude**.

Many people live their lives never fully sure that they are loved as they are. Many have horrendous stories that offer very plausible reasons for their low self-esteem: stories about parents who were not giving them what they needed, about teachers who mistreated them, about friends who betrayed them, and about a Church which left them out in the cold during a critical moment in their life. The parable of the prodigal son is a story that speaks about a love that existed before any rejection was possible and that will still be there after all rejections have taken place. It is the first and everlasting love of God. It is the fountain of all true human love, even the most limited. Jesus' whole life and preaching had only one aim: to reveal this inexhaustible, unlimited motherly and fatherly love of his God and to show the way to let that love guide every part of our daily lives. In his painting of the father, Rembrandt offers me a glimpse of that love. It is the love that always welcomes home and always wants to celebrate.

12/12/16 Basilica of our Lady of Guadalupe to LC

*My beloved, I have brought you before me **to receive the fullness of the blessing God desires to give you**... Receive my tears of joy; joy for your fiat united to mine; joy for your faithfulness to live united as One Body to the Holy Sacrifice of my Son. **Receive the crown of glory** reserved for the martyrs of Christ's love. Do not be afraid during the time of the great trial that must come upon the world, for I am with you. You have followed me to the altar of sacrifice. It is here in the perfect sacrifice of*

the Mass that I am forming you as God's holy warriors of love to fight the final battle. Remain with me in the perfect Sacrifice of my Son and you will receive the crown of glory. I bless you, my little one, with the kiss of Abba as He seals your heart with the mission given to you for the glory of God and the salvation of many souls.

I need to choose daily to live in the joy of the Father's banquet here on earth. For the older brother the banquet was taking place right next to him, in his very own home, but he chose not to enter and participate in the joy of the banquet because of his resentful heart.

- How do I choose to live each day of my life, in the joy of the banquet or in the bondage of my resentful heart?
- Do I believe that all the Father has is mine because I am his daughter or son?
- Am I open daily to be lavished by his love and gifts, surprised by him, or do I turn away in my resentment, forgetting who I am and that I can live in Abba's embrace if I choose to?

To deny ourselves means that at every moment of our lives we choose to live in the joy of our Father, therefore, we deny living from our disorders, we deny ourselves becoming melancholy, negative, nasty, resentful, frustrated- we deny living in the spirit of slavery! We choose to live our new identities in Christ as the sons and daughters of the King, never forgetting. Then we can remain in peace and joy even amidst great sorrows and trials. This is how to receive and live in the fullness of the blessing, which is living in "Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven."

Mathew 9:14-15 - "Can the wedding guest mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?"

If we are spouses of the Bridegroom, we must be people of joy. Our spouses can be a mess, our children a mess, problems in our communities but we live in the celebration - dancing and singing- of the wedding banquet because we know who we are - spouses of the most amazing Bridegroom and daughter or son of Abba - the most splendid, generous, kind, tender, merciful King, daughters and sons lavished and spoiled by their Father. Who can take our joy away?

The purpose of the Simple Path is to bring us into the embrace of our Father as one with Jesus, to receive the fullness of His blessing. Jesus, Mary & St Joseph lived in this joy. Their lives were filled with great sufferings, sorrows, hardships, yet, they could live in continuous praise, awe, gratitude and joy because they never left the Father's presence and they lived in the awareness of the Father's gaze upon them.

Reflection:

Through journeying in the Path of the Cross, have I come to more intimately know the love of the Father?

How has this experience begun to change how I live my daily life?

What is preventing me from living joy?