

## **Do You Want to Be Well - Responding to the Lord Allison Gingras**

I want to spend some time with you, meditating upon one line in John's gospel. *"Do you want to be well?" "Do you want to be well?"* This is the scene where the man is at the well of Bethesda. I hope I said that right. And he's been there for a really long time waiting for somebody to come when the water is stirred up and put him in. And Jesus arrives and says, *"Do you want to be well?"* And that question's always kind of, talk to me a little bit. Of course, he wants to be well, if he didn't want to be well why would he spend all that time at the well, right? At that pond, at that place to be put in.

### **Stop Being Reliant on Someone Else**

And I realized as I was reading it to prepare for our little time together, that the man has made getting well reliant on everyone else. It relies on somebody stirring up the water, and then it relies on somebody lifting him up and putting him in at the right time. But then how is the man actually healed? From Jesus. When Jesus comes, when he has faith and trusts in Jesus, he's healed.

Now I know not everybody who prays for physical healing in this world is healed that way. There are many people we will pray for and love, and hope and do novenas for, and have other people praying for and have priest prayed over them, and they will not be healed of whatever it is that ails them in this place. And in this time, it will be in the next, right? With God, and in heaven, we pray. We hope you continue to pray for them. But yet there's still this desire to be healed. God wants to heal you, physically, yes.

### **A Time to Focus on Spiritual Healing**

But I really want to spend some time focusing today on spiritual healing, on being whole spiritually. To being connected with God in the most precious most perfect way we can. And that relies on us. And those somebody you can rely on. It is wonderful to have speakers like myself and all of those joining you in this Pray More Novena Lenten Retreat to give you insight, to hopefully encourage you, get you excited about the Catholic faith, which I think is like the best. It really, the Catholic faith saved my life.

### **The Catholic Faith: How it Saved My Life**

The Catholic faith is so rich and filled with so much I did not know. And I relied on many people in my life to teach me what the Catholic faith was. But when I took it upon myself and started to research and to read and to spend time in God's word, and pray and do many, many, many spiritual reading book clubs and Bible studies, that's when it became real. That's when my relationship to Jesus became real not just this idea that I could have a relationship with Jesus, but

I actually did. I actually started to hear His voice in my heart, I started to understand what was expected of me as His beloved daughter. And I began to become well spiritually. I began to heal from many, many, many years of being separated from Jesus. From decisions that were painful, that caused not just myself hurt, but many other people around me. But God is so faithful. And He heard my pleas, and the more I spent time learning, the more I grew close to Him. And I could answer the question, "*Do you want to be well?*" -Yes, yes, I'd like to be, well please sign me up. I would very much like to be well. I'm going to ask you that question for you to ponder. "*Do you want to be well?*" Are you willing to put your suffering in union with the cross?

## Standing in Between

This, the week of Holy Week, that is a time to really ponder. Are you relying on others to make you well, to grow your faith, to bring you closer to Christ? Or are you relying on Christ? We see in Exodus; Moses stands in the breach between the wrath of God and the people. Just as we see, especially during Holy week, Jesus does the same for you and I. He stands in that breach between the wrath of God and us. He is mercy incarnate; the mercy that we have been given in this time that we are called to embrace is now, and it is abundant. It is so beautiful that Jesus loves us so much that He would give of Himself on the cross. Have you ever spent time just holding a cross and contemplating, contemplating the cross? What that meant for Jesus to be put upon it? To have every sin put upon Him?

## Do You Want to be the Pincer or the Hammer?

I live near a shrine, La Salette shrine, on that cross, there is Jesus, obviously on the cross, but above it, is pincers and a hammer. And the La Salettes teach, like, do you want to be the hammer that nails Jesus to the cross, or do you want to be the pincers who pull to help remove Him, from your behavior, from your willingness to accept His mercy to go to confession, to try to live the beatitudes and the commandments to try to live a faith, a life of faith? Do we want to be well? Do we want to be whole? Do we want the life that Jesus died to give us?

It's a tough question, right? That's a tough thing to answer. And there are many moments in our life when we are going to face things that we wonder, is Jesus really listening? Is He really here? Does He really care? I can tell you; He does 100%. If He didn't care, He wouldn't have brought this retreat to your life. He wouldn't have given you this opportunity to hear how much He loves you. To hear all the ways that you can grow in faith, that you can be well spiritually, faithfully, that you can have this opportunity to know Him and to love Him, but to allow Him to love you.

## Are You Allowing God to Love You?

I remember when I first started to come back to the faith, I went to a priest and I was kind of complaining that I was trying to follow all the rules, right? I was doing my rosary as often as I could, I was going to mass, at least weekly, I was going to confession monthly, I was doing my prayers and Bible study, volunteering at the church. I had the whole list of things that I was

doing the best that I could to be faithful. Like, I thought I had like checked all the boxes. Yet, I still felt this emptiness. I still didn't feel this love that everyone kept talking about from God. And he looked me in the eye. And just with the most sweetest voice, sweetest temperament, just said, "Alison, are you allowing God to love you?" Well, there's something I hadn't thought about. I come from a very difficult childhood. My dad was a good man, he provided for us. But he also didn't come from a family of great showing of love. You know, they weren't a very affectionate family. So, he didn't really know how to show his affection. So, I mistook many, many years his aloofness, his workaholic-ness as not being loved and cared for.

A few years ago, we lost him. And in those process the few years we were really blessed to have these years of being able to reconnect, to know our time was even less. And to be able to really understand who he was and for him to tell me, like how much he loved me, and that he did the best that he could. And that he had no idea that whole time I felt so disconnected and unloved. But it had definitely spilled into my relationship with God. I didn't know how to allow a father to love me because I didn't know what it felt like. I didn't know what it looked like. And in Father Joe's words of, "Let Him love you," just really struck a chord in my heart.

### Just Sit and Be Quiet

So, what I did, and he actually told me to go and do this, he said, "Go sit somewhere in your home, in a quiet space and just be quiet. Don't pray, don't ask for anything, don't read scripture, just sit. The only prayer you're to ask, is for the Holy spirit to open your heart, to be loved. It's your only goal, only task. Open my heart to be loved. Let Jesus stand in that breach. That the blessed mother bring to you the love that she has for the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Just quietly sit with those two and let God love you." And I did.

I sat there for a while. I even sat and stared out the window at the clouds, at the heavens thinking that might help. It didn't. And just as I started to kind of have this image of my own father, and the one thing that we did do together is that he and I would Sunday afternoon, sit on the couch and watch NASCAR together. He worked very hard, he was only home Sunday afternoons, and he would always get very comfy on the couch, send his remote control to find the NASCAR. And then we would cuddle back together and watch the race. And in this particular moment, as I sat asking God to love me, I kind of went back to that moment of being with my dad. That very quiet, simple moment, nothing special happening, no big compensations going on, just being together.

And just as I got kind of into that moment, one of my kids yelled that they needed me. I was like, "Come on!" Like, it was all I could do not to yell at my kid. Like, "Hey, don't you see I'm trying to have a moment with God here, and you are bugging me?" It didn't seem the proper reaction of trying to grow in faith, in Love of God. So, I went and took care of my child. And when I came back, I don't even know how much longer, I instantly this time, no work required, instantly remembered that moment, felt that warmth, felt that peace and understood what it meant to be loved by God. Such a gift.

All I asked for the Holy Spirit was open my heart to be loved. And that simple moment of my own life, not even recognizing it before that is a moment of a father's love. Just that quiet moment. In everyone's moment, it's going to look different. Every way, we were made so differently. And God can love us in all the ways we are best loved.

## A Different Kind of Fast

I'm going to ask you this Lent, to fast from social media for just not forever, just a little bit. I always tell people, just a little side note. I always tell people, please don't fast from social media during lent. This is a time where people are most looking for God. They're most, people who have gone away from the faith are using this time to kind of grow in faith. And we need to be a presence out there to share good things about God. So, maybe just take an hour fasting from your social media. Take time fasting from a little bit of your work, don't bring, I mean, we all bring a homework these days but take time to fast from TV, from talking, from the world. That can be a fast by the way, it's not just food or candy. But we can fast from activity, from noise, from TV, from social media, from everything.

## Just Ask the Holy Spirit

Sit quietly, ask the Holy Spirit to allow your heart to be loved. Ask the Holy spirit to help you answer the question of Jesus saying, "Do you want to be well?" "Yes Lord. I want to be well; I want to be whole. I want to be loved. And I know that you Lord and your father love me more than anyone ever could. In this lent, I want to feel it. I want to enter into Holy week knowing that I am loved beyond all measure. I am blessed beyond all measure. I have a God who sent His only begotten son that if I believe in Him, I will have eternal life. The same son who died for me on the cross, who comes veiled in bread and wine, that I may be the temple, His temple. I may be in communion with Him, body, blood, soul and divinity through the Eucharist." Oh, what a faith, what a faith. We are blessed to be a part of this lent.

I hope that you're able to find that quiet moment to ask God to love you. Let me rephrase that. To ask God to allow you to see how much you are loved. How much Jesus loves you that He stands between the wrath of God for our sins, the justice that we are deserving because of the decisions we make, the choices we make. That Heaven is opened, that Easter so long ago because we are so loud. That's why I ask you, "*Do you want to be well?*"