

Renewing and Healing Our Relationship with God

Allison Gingras

One of my favorite moments in a Christmas Carol, especially the Muppets version is when the Ghost of Christmas Present welcomes Scrooge in. He says with a very boisterous voice, "Come and know me better man. Come and know me better man." Sometimes I feel like that's kind of how God greets me in prayer time, "come and know me better woman. Come and know me better."

Intentionally come to know who God is, revealed by God, Himself in scripture, through prayer, through the Holy Spirit, through the teachings of the church. Not as I imagine Him to be, not as I have kind of conjured Him sometimes in my head, especially before I came to completely decide that I was going to follow the faith which meant learning about the faith, opening up my catechism, listening to retreats like this and spending time really understanding my faith.

And I feel like part of that message from that Ghost of Christmas Present, I know, wrong season, but this message is still pretty good. Was the common haste as we watch a Christmas Carol, when we watch "The Ghost of Christmas Present", you see him quickly fade in age in just 24 hours. Kind of that understanding that Dickens had at the time was fleeting. The time passes quickly, and we have to take hold of the moments we have. We have to take hold of these moments, not waste a single moment and use it wisely. Use it for the good of others and to know God better. - To know who God is and who we want to be as His daughters and sons.

Lent: A Time of Renewal

Lent is a time of renewal, of healing spiritually or in your relationship with God or the church. God wants to heal you. He wants us to return to Him and to be made whole and to be brought into relationship.

My daughter is deaf, so as I'm trying to think of the words to say, I can only think of this sign. I just want to bring it together. You know, this is the to bring together. God wants us to be in close proximity. He wants us to be together with Him. And St. Paul gives us many messages of perseverance, right? Of pressing forward towards God. We can get very weary in our faith, especially if there are certain prayers that have gone unanswered or they weren't answered in the way that we thought would have been best, I'm always trying to give God cliff notes to how I think He should answer my prayers. Like "here Lord is the problem which you already know. I know, but I want to just give you a little hint, a little help in case you're not sure how to exactly answer this prayer for me because I know you're busy and maybe because I haven't stayed as close to you as I possibly could, perhaps we lost a little contact," but that's not how it works.

Just Like A Parent

God completely knows you. He loves you. He knows exactly what you need, and He knows better what you need than you know. And I think, you know, as a parent in my children, I sometimes have to let them have logical consequences, natural consequences to their behaviors to help them learn to develop these critical thinking skills, the decision-making, this moral fiber. Like they need to sometimes fail to succeed. And I'm always there right behind them, loving them, there to help them if they ask for it or to try to buffer what I can. But there are just some lessons in life I have to allow them to learn, because it's for their good, their greater good, their spiritual being, their emotional, mental, physical well-being.

And I feel like that's kind of what God does with us. And those broken pieces that we have, just like I'm there to help my children mend and pick up the pieces and go forward, He is there to grace us, to fill us with His grace is undeserved yet freely given gift of His grace and strengthen us. And there's many different ways that we are healed through God. And of course, we're healed spiritually. And one of my favorites is confession.

A Painful and Humbling Healing Story

but I also, you know, the first time that I did present for Pray More Novenas, the first time I presented for Pray More Novenas, my hands were ravished by the effects of Dyshidrotic Eczema. They were painful and almost useless at that time. Fast forward, through prayer, through being prayed over by one of the most amazing healing priests in the world, Father Ubald, through recognizing the root cause of the situation which is allergies to certain foods and drinks. And so through medical, through prayer, I love how God gives us people in this world who can help us heal physically but there's also that component of giving it to Him in prayer. And it wasn't overnight. It took over three years for that to heal and they still exist. I've just learned to manage it through some creams and again, just being aware of what I can and cannot eat.

I remember at one point laughing looking through an old journal and I had asked God to help me to do better in managing self-control over food. And I thought, like "this is not how I would have asked you to heal this God." Again, perhaps I should keep my cliff notes to myself because I possibly don't know the best answers for things in my life.

And I remember again talking about in length of both the disease and the difficulties but the beautiful lessons that God had given me over and over again in healing, in learning how to rely on Him and to rely on others. It was very humbling. It was such a humbling experience, physically humbling because it wasn't very attractive. And I had to learn to accept this about myself and just really to look at people's reactions to it, how kind people could be, and other people wouldn't even notice it. And I would think it was the most horrendous thing and yet people were so kind. And I learned again, the humility, the reliance on others.

I learned fasting cause I have to fast from many different foods, here we are in Lent. This is a time of alms, prayer and fasting and fasting has always been a very difficult tenant of Lent for me. One of the aspects of Lent I've often really struggled with and, you know, I have to fast from just about every kind of food you can imagine. It's just, it's extensive, the list.

The Blessing of Understanding My Tiny Cross

But in letting those things go, God has given me this amazing gift, this blessing of discovering new foods that I would have never have discovered perhaps but also this incredible understanding of the cross, of my tiny cross being linked with the greater cross of greater work of Jesus and just my small sacrifice and offering it up and finding the blessing and the positive in it has really given me a great peace and being able to just also use it for blessing other people, you know, taking that sacrifice, taking that struggle that we have. And instead of letting it overcome me I try to use it as a way of connecting with others, to sharing with them God's love and His mercy and I mean, He had great mercy on me because He did allow it to heal after a few years, but He also just gave me such a better disposition of faith because of it.

And it could have been so easy. And then there were moments, trust me, there were moments during the middle of it that I just wanted to blame God for all of it and be like, why, why are you allowing me to be with this illness? And I'm a germaphobe and one of the worst things that come from that was the struggle or the concern that I would get an infection. And in fact, at one point I did and just that whole fear that would overcome me, but yet again, there was God. And even in the most worst outcome there would still be God. And I learned to trust that whatever He allows, He allows for my good, my ultimate good, the good for me to be with Him forever in heaven.

And those lessons to this day remain with me and I need to stay vigilant to stay well but I also need to hold each one of those lessons in my heart to stay connected to God. And I'm sure you feel the same way about certain things that have happened in your life. The lessons that God has taught you through struggles, through difficulties, through certain circumstances that if you hold onto those, they do help you to grow in your faith, to grow as a disciple and to, St. Paul has this great line and I wish I could remember. I always, I use this line all the time and I can never remember where it is in the scriptures, but he says, "Whatever you've been comforted in, God will then use you to comfort others in. Those who allowed God to comfort you in your circumstance, God will then use you to comfort others." What a beautiful way to look at some of the struggles that we face in our life.

Fearing the Sickness of My Soul

However, of all the illnesses that I fear, I fear lack of faith, the sickness of my soul, the sickness of my spirit, more than any. And so, my antidote for that is the Sacrament of Confession, of Reconciliation, continually coming to God to be reconciled to Him. It is a sacrament of healing along with daily doses like see what I did there, daily doses of prayer and scripture. Living my faith each day keeps doubt and despair away.

Let's see, a moment of faith each day keeps the despair away. No, okay, it was working in my head about a doctor a day, an apple a day. No, okay. Thanks for bearing with me on that though.

And you won't forget soon that we need to come daily to God daily. It's not one of those things that we can just go to mass on Sunday, give God our Sunday and then the six other days of the week, we just kind of do whatever we want. That doesn't work. Trust me, I tried it, been there, done that as they say, didn't work. It has to be a daily connection to God. It has to be a daily coming to Him. And for me, I also, I get kind of a little lost in looking for signs and wonders in my life. And instead of just trusting what God has, I know that I am definitely one of those people that Jesus would chastise for looking for the signs and the wonders, and not just living by faith, living by faith instead of by sight.

Those Who Believe Will Inspire Others to Believe

And I think about John 4, talk about the power of faith and healing and what touches Jesus's heart. We see again and again, in the scriptures that faith of, that deep faith, that people who don't look for the signs and wonders, the people who believe without first seeing the miracle, who just know in their hearts that God, Jesus can do all things, that nothing's impossible for God. Those are the things we see really touch Jesus's heart. And I see the officer in John 4:43-54. He shows no need for the signs or for the wonders. He just knows that Jesus can do what He can and in boldness of faith, he comes, and he asks for the healing. We see that with the hemorrhaging woman who also comes with pure faith, risking everything just to touch the hem of Jesus's garment. And yet we hear in that scripture that His heart was touched. He said, "Who touched me?" And we know that it means more than just who touched me physically but who touched my heart. Those who believe, inspire other people to believe.

Earlier in John's gospel, we see the woman at the well and one of my favorite lines from that entire scripture which we see this amazing encounter with Christ. And I can tell you right now than any encounter you have with Christ, you will never be the same again. And if you read John 4, it's just filled with people who have encountered Christ in magnificent and simple ways, and who are never the same again. Those who believe, inspire other people to believe. And we see the woman at the well who Jesus comes and offers her water, that she would never thirst again. He offers her faith and hope. He offers her hope in this beautiful encounter and she leaves Him. She leaves everything behind. She leaves the past behind. She leaves everything behind and she goes and becomes an evangelist, a disciple. And she tells people about this amazing man, this Messiah and all that He has done.

And my favorite line as I was about to say in that whole gospel is when the people come back to her and they say, "We believe not because of what you have said, but because we have seen." That's why people who believe, inspire other people to believe. That's what we can do this Lent. We can share what God has done for us authentically, the healings, physically, emotionally, spiritually.

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However, God has touched your heart and healed you. How you have touched His heart by your faith, trusting that whether your prayers are answered how you wished or how you sent your request in, knowing that your prayers are always answered for your good, that's inspiring. And that inspires other people as well.

So, my question to you: How will you come to know Christ better this Lent? Come and know Him better.