

Do You Love Me?

A Practical Guide to Catholic Prayer and Spirituality

3. Experiencing

Way-In

Here are some pictures which highlight some of the different ways in which we communicate with one another.



We come to know other people through conversing with them. We will think a little more deeply about this way of communicating in our next chapter. We also grow in our friendships in other ways and experience their love through observation, how they act in different situations, through their body language, through touch and through just being with them in companionable silence. Not all communication is obvious. People can get to know each other in all sorts of different ways.

Reflect-&-Jot



Take time to think about a significant relationship in your own life. Jot down the many ways you got to know the other person and what helped that relationship to grow.

These handouts contain core readings, reflections and pictures from individual chapters of *Do You Love Me?* and are intended as an introduction to, or a recap of, or a simplified use of the guide.



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Inside-The-Text

Here is the next part of the chapter from St John's Gospel. When we left Peter and John they and the other disciples had seen the Lord, Peter had jumped out of the boat and made for land while the others brought in the boat. Here is what happens next.

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

(John 21:9-14)

We have no idea what went on between Peter and Jesus when Peter gets to the beach before the others. When, however, the boat is dragged up the beach we find, not some great moment of revelation like the Transfiguration, but a humble picnic. There is a fire, something to eat and company. It is in this setting that Jesus communicates with his friends and he does it in several ways.

Reflect-&-Jot



Read the Gospel passage again. Try and picture the scene. If you were there where would you be – who would you be? What would you say? If you like, write the conversation down or sketch yourself in the scene or choose some pictures which would express how you might react to the invitation.

Digging-Deeper

This short Gospel passage is packed with images about how our spirituality helps us to experience the reality of the Lord with us. Let's look at them one at a time and see how they apply to us.

God in the Ordinary First we talked about God using the ordinary to communicate with us. Everything has the potential to speak to us of God, even our failures. It is not just the big things like the birth of a child or the loss of a loved one, it is also in the smaller everyday things of life; the smile someone gives us when we are feeling really down, the laughter we share with a friend, the look on the face of a homeless person. If we make a conscious effort to keep our eyes open we will find God everywhere, drawing us on, conversing with us through others, challenging us through the injustices we see.

Gifts The image of the charcoal fire has its own significance. Jesus has lit a fire for a very pragmatic reason - in order to cook breakfast. He has even provided the food, some fish is already cooking on it. But Jesus also asks the disciples to bring some of the fish they have caught. Our spirituality says that God does both for us.


Breathing spaces Jesus has also lit this fire to provide the disciples with much needed refreshment and rest. Physically they have been fishing all night. No doubt they were very hungry and tired and Jesus responds to this very human need.

Take & Eat Next we hear an invitation, "Come and have breakfast". And here we hear echoes of that other meal where Jesus says "Take, eat". This fish, which the disciples have brought from their own everyday life, is to be the means through which they are fed. In this passage we see a small community (the disciples), the risen Lord and the meal; the same components that we find in every Mass today. This picnic on the beach is not a Eucharist as such but it is an image of what Catholic spirituality has always, believed, known and experienced, namely that at the Eucharist, the followers of Jesus gather with each other around the altar and are fed with the Lord himself.

Silence The next thing that happens is unspoken. The disciples know, "it is the Lord" and, at the same time, they want to know who he is! It seems paradoxical. If they know why do they need to ask? And yet there is an insight here. Sometimes as we grow in our relationship with Jesus we know something deep down but at the same time, can't quite make sense of it. It is then, like the disciples, that we need to leave it unspoken. One of the great treasures in our spirituality is the experience of silence.

Reflect-&-Jot

Look at each of the paragraphs above and underline the things which

- reassure you
-  • surprise you
- challenge you.

Put them in your notebook or on your computer - using your own words if you can.

Inside-Out

Everything we have seen so far is about the means the Lord gives us to grow in relationship with him. Exactly how we do this and how we use the treasures we have been given will be different for each one of us but there are plenty of opportunities to choose from. Let's look at each of the major images we have outlined above and see the different practical ways we can make them our own.

Try-One-Of-These

- Look out for where God is with you today. Keep asking yourself "Was that God I just saw and heard?"
- Tomorrow evening spend a while looking back on the day and asking yourself "Where have I experienced God?"

Putting-It-All-Together

Catholic spirituality says:

- God uses the ordinary, the familiar, the commonplace as ways to meet us.
- God works with the gifts of our own personality and dispositions. We experience what it means to be in relationship with the Lord by praying in the way that is right for us.
- In order to live a balanced life we need to have breathing spaces. • In the Eucharist we are fed and so grow in our relationship with God.
- One of the greatest treasures we have is the gift of silence.



Pray-A-Psalm

Take some time to slowly pray the psalm. (It is psalm 131.) It gives us the image of a relationship of trust, of a fed child, quietly resting in hope. Reflect on what message it gives of the relationship between God and you. Pray about it.

*O Lord my heart is not lifted up,
my eyes are not raised too high;
I do not occupy myself with things
too great and too marvellous for me.
But have calmed and quieted my soul,
like a weaned child with its mother;
my soul within me is like a weaned child.
O Israel hope in the Lord
from this time on and for evermore.*

All-Together

If you are using this book as part of a group here are some suggestions about how to share reflections on the contents of this chapter and what you might have discovered from it. Pick and choose what suits your group.

- Share stories about how you have discovered God communicating with you in the ordinary events of life.
- Share what forms of prayer suit you best and bring you closer to God.
- What could you as a group do to provide others with a breathing space in your parish?
- Could you, would you, like to arrange an event where people could experience some silence. If so, what might this be and what is the next step?
- What do you find difficult about silence? What do you find helpful about it?
- Pass a lit candle round the group. Each person holds it for a short time and prays in silence for whatever they wish. Other members of the group pray for that person in silence.