

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
February 9, 2020

*The soul must "be still and wait for the Lord." Always there will be that pendulum swing
of darkness and light . . .*

("How to Find God" – Hubert Van Zeller, p.150)

On the Memorial of St. John of the Cross, we reflected on a poem he had written named "Noche Oscura," the "Dark Night." It would come to be widely known as "The Dark Night of the Soul." Let me briefly recall some of the points we discussed.

In our day-to-day existence, we often function out of habits which can carry over into our worship and reverence for God, leading us to lose sight of the light that only God can bring. In the words of St. John of the Cross, we "*measure God by ourselves and not ourselves by God.*" We look to make ourselves the center. We can't see the forest for the trees. Because we cannot always hear or comprehend the answer to our prayer, we may become lax in our prayer life. Our confession may seem a source of embarrassment, causing us to seek to **EXCUSE** ourselves rather than **ACCUSE** ourselves.

This confusion of spirit **can be** misdiagnosed as depression. These supposed psychological issues actually stem from the spiritual issues that are the real source. We will begin seeking for what is missing, allowing God to lead us into that "Dark Night of the Soul." God brings us into this dark night to prove us, the scripture says, "*like gold in a furnace.*" It is in the purgation of the dark night that we will come face-to-face with our fear of total surrender. This dark night will bring us to stop looking for God on our own terms and awaken a desire for true intimacy with God. It is through this humility and surrender that God can once again bring light in the chaos.

This darkness is not something that is new. Abraham experienced this coming darkness when God commanded him to sacrifice his son Isaac (Genesis 22:1-13). From this dark night, Abraham entered into the light of God's covenant (Genesis 22:17-18).

Another example we all know is the testing of the Apostles. After years of travelling with Jesus, hearing his words, witnessing his miracles, basking in his light, remember what happened on that first Holy Thursday. When Jesus needed them most in the Garden, they slept. When the crowd came to arrest him, they all ran. As he hung on the Cross, all but John watched from a distance. Can you imagine the darkness they experienced because of their own failure, lack of faith and fear as they watched him being placed in the Tomb? In their eyes, nothing could be more final than the Tomb. Death was, to them, the end of hope. But the light overcame the darkness. How brilliant that light when Jesus appeared in the upper room, offering peace and forgiveness, breathing his Spirit on them.

Today let us pray that we all, through the purgation of the Dark Night, can find that same peace and forgiveness. Let us pray for the breath of the Spirit to bring us out of the darkness into the light. Let us pray for the faith that will bring us strength. Let us pray for the grace to overcome fear letting that light shine as a beacon to others seeking to step into the light shining from the face of Christ.