

Lent 2020 - "Finding God through...Reflection" - Fr. Ian

The Rule of Benedict states that each day should have set times for prayer: Mattins, Lauds, etc & ending with Compline. After Compline, the "Greater Silence" is to be observed - no one is allowed to speak, thus acknowledging the need for sleep, and also allowing time for personal / private prayer.

Two of my four years of training for Ordination were spent living in community; each day began with the Eucharist at 7am, followed by "Meditation" - silent prayer / devotional reading / preparation for the new day. Time for "Reflection".

The Dictionary tells us: the verb "To Reflect" has two meanings:

1) to bend / throw back - sound, light, image: eg a mirror / pool of still water "reflects" an image. Or: to correspond in appearance: "their behaviour reflects their will to succeed".

2) to consider / meditate / remind oneself (or others) of something said or done.

The Rule of St Benedict: gives Time for Reflection in both meanings of the word.

In ancient mythology, Narcissus' obsession with his own reflection led to downfall.

Jesus had a stern warning about looking in a mirror and then forgetting what we see!

When we study our reflection, do we see the "image of God" in which we are made?

Reflecting on our image caused the Psalmist to write: "I am fearfully and wonderfully made" - with all my blemishes and peculiar characteristics, I am still "in the image of God".

After his Baptism, Jesus deliberately withdrew into the desert to reflect on his future ministry and to make sure that all he was to say and do would reflect the image of God.

How can WE find God through Relection?

1) Reflect on Scripture:

Eg - Last Sunday's Gospel (Lent 3) John ch 4 - Jesus & the Woman at the well.

Did anything occur to us that we had not realised before?

What was our answer to the woman's question: "Are you greater...?"

Did Jesus' attitude to her lifestyle surprise / encourage us?

What do we understand by "living water"?

2) Reflect on an Act of Worship:

Eg - Sunday's Eucharist - "This, our sacrifice..."

Is the Eucharist truly "your" offering?

What is a "sacrifice"?

Did you really concentrate on Jesus' words: "Take, eat; do this..."

When you received the Body of Christ, did you give thanks?

Did you read the readings again at home?

Did you reflect on the sermon?

3) Reflect on the day now past:

Eg - People you met / places you went

Did anything go wrong? Can it be put right?

Who / what do I need to give thanks for?

Looking back over the day, did I find God in disguise?

4) Reflect on world around us:

Eg - world news; where is God at work?

The natural world around us; how is it sustained?

What is my role / part in it all?

Can we find God in the current crisis?

Reflecting on what has been and on what is to come:

a) helps us remember our image; not only what we look like, but how we appear to others. Do we reveal the “image & likeness” in which we were created?

b) helps us to prepare for the future - the next day, the next appointment, and even further ahead.

Finding God in our reflections: convinces / reassures us that there is an eternal home prepared for all of us. **Thanks be to God**