

Rejuvenating a Close Encounter with Jesus – Lent 2022

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Agenda

- Introduction
- Call to Prayer African Drum Rhythms
- Opening Prayer
- A Fresh Encounter with Jesus
- Ways of having a close encounter with Jesus
- Moments of Reflection
- Concluding Prayer
- Adjourn

Definition: What is an Encounter with God?

- It is a relationship between God and a person (ME).
- God desires to have an intimate relationship with you and me.
- This encounter is initiated by God and we cannot create this experience; it is not our own making. Listen to Bishop Barron as he explains the divine experience. <https://youtu.be/m-NoRbPEPzs>
- God spoke to people in Ancient times, and he still speaks to us today.
- Our response is to be ready to listen by keeping our spiritual ears open to what he tells us.

What Can you expect in an encounter with God?

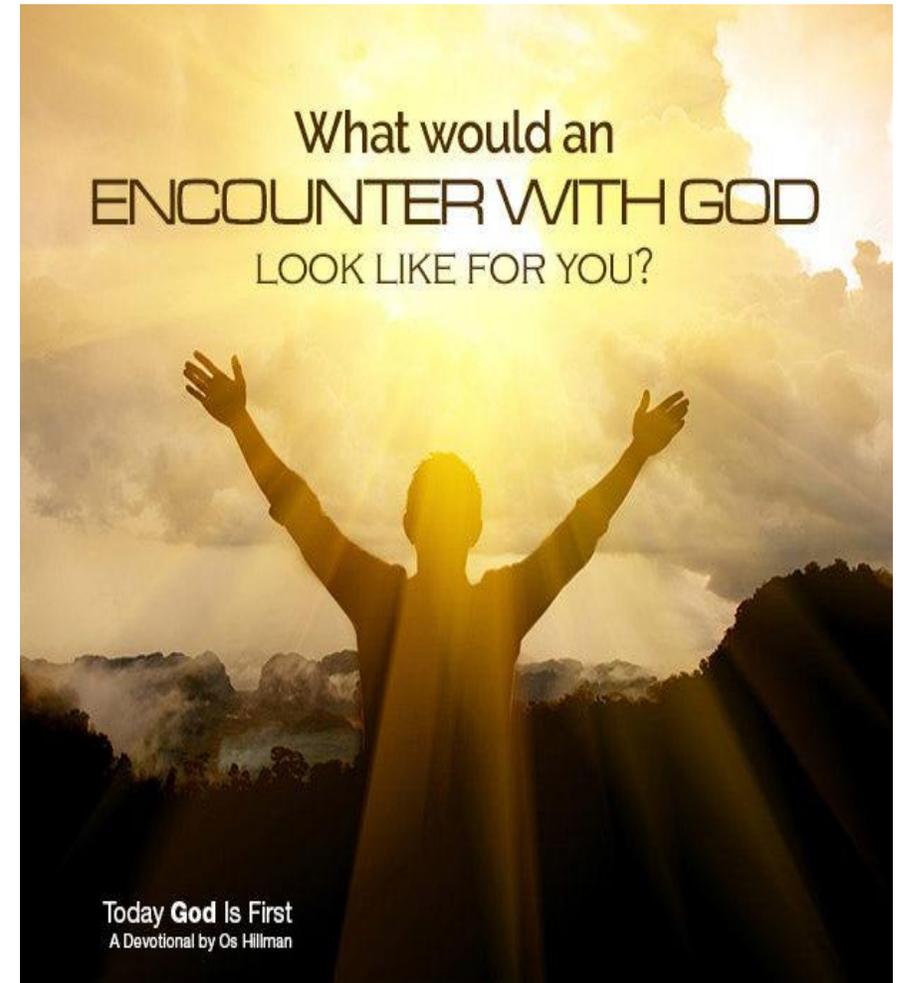
- 1. An awareness of God's presence/holiness:**
 - When the Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, there was a sense of awe and wonder. (Lk 1:26-38)
- 2. A sense of our unworthiness;** an immediate awareness of our sinfulness.
 - Jeremiah in responding to his call said; "I am young, unworthy and unable to speak.
 - But the Lord said; " I have put my words in your mouth, go and I will always be with you to help and guide you on your journey!" (Jeremiah 1: 4-10).
- 3. Transformation - A sense of a new identity:**
 - The Holy Spirit reveals to us the dark spots in our lives which don't fit our new identity. "*If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature.....the old has passed away!*" (2 Cor. 5:17)
- 4. A Call to action;** to respond to his grace and this might come in dramatic ways.
 - The call of Abraham, leaves everything behind and goes to Canaan, where God told him to go. (Genesis 11:27 – 12:9).
- 5. An encounter with God re-awakens our love and gratefulness** for the magnitude of his sacrifice for our redemption.

How do we encounter God?

- Because God is invisible and intangible, we encounter his presence through the following ways:
 1. Through our Divine Call to Holiness
 2. Prayer (Private & Communal)
 - Mass, Adoration, Rosary, Devotions etc...
 3. Scripture Reading (Bible)
 - Meditation (Through the quiet whispers of the Holy Spirit)
 - Reading of spiritual books
 4. Through Personal Circumstances both good and challenging.
 5. Through our daily routines at home, work, Parish, on the road, at the store, church etc...
- 6. Through other human beings and through nature.

Reflection #1

- We all have encountered God in one way or another.
- Please reflect on the following questions:
- Have you ever experienced a vivid encounter with God in your life?
- How did it come about and how did you feel?
- What was your response?
- Please share your insights at your table.
- **Song:** Lord You Have Come to the Seashore by Tim Lewis
<https://youtu.be/l6JH3OQzzBA>



The Divine Call to Holiness

- “The purpose of our creation is to know God, to love him, to serve him here on earth, and to praise him forever in heaven.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church).
- This in itself is the reason for our encounter with God.
- We were created to be united with him, and to go back to him at the end of our lives.
- At Baptism, we received God’s Sanctifying Grace which got rid of the original sin and restored God’s life in us.

A Call to Holiness continued...

- **God created us in his image, and calls us to live wholesome and holy lives. Jesus admonishes us to be holy as our heavenly Father is holy (Matthew 5:48 and).** *“But, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in every aspect of your conduct!” (1 Peter 1:15)*
- **Below are some aspects of our lives in which we ought to grow in holiness:**
 - Take care of your **Physical Well-being**:
 - Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. *“Do you know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit?” (1 Cor. 6:19).*
 - Be a good **Social Human Being**:
 - Keep God’s greatest commandment of love. *“You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind and...”You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:38-39)*
 - Watch out for your **Emotional Well-being**:
 - Make choices that enhance God’s life within you.
 - Maintain a **Vibrant Spiritual Life**:
 - Have a good relationship with God at all times.

Our Physical Well-being.....

- God wants us to take good care of our Physical Well-being because our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (*1 Cor. 6:19*).
- Eat well, sleep well, exercise, take time for yourself and all your needs.
- Take the Sabbath to worship God and a little time for yourself.
- God rested on the 7th day, relaxed and took time to enjoy his creation. *"On the seventh day God completed the work he had been doing; he rested on the seventh day from all the work he had undertaken."* (*Genesis 2:2-3*).
- Everyone deserves a day off, a day of rest...it is good for the soul!

Our Social Well-being.....

- God wants us to be social human beings, relating well with others.
- Create and maintain healthy relationships.
- Follow God's law of love. (*Matthew 22:38-39*)
- Love God with all your heart and your neighbors as you love yourself.
- Bring grace to others through service and by doing acts of kindness.

Our Emotional Well-being....!

- Emotional well-being is just as important.
- Make choices that enhance God's life within you.
- Stay in a state of grace at all times.
- God indeed calls us to strive to be better versions of ourselves everyday (*Mathew Kelly: Rediscovering Catholicism*).

Our Spiritual Well-being:

- **God wants us to have a vibrant spiritual life by having a good relationship with Him through the following:**
- Prayer
- Regular reception of the Sacraments
- Mass attendance
- Reading the Bible and other spiritual literature
- Observing the Ten Commandments and Jesus' Law of love.
- Trusting and invoking the power of the Holy Spirit to guide us on this journey of faith.

Reflection #2.....

❖ Reflection #2:

Please reflect on the following questions. Take some time to discern where you are on your journey to holiness and where you need to be.

a) Where are you in each of the 4 aspects of your life (Physical, Social, Emotional and Spiritual)?

b) What are some of the things you are doing very well right now; which show that you are trying to be a good person, striving to live a holy life?

c) Where do you need to change, improve, start over or even start from scratch?

NOTE: This is indeed the purpose of the Lenten Season; a time of graceful renewal, giving us an opportunity of looking closely at our lives as a whole; and as the Holy Spirit to help us to rejuvenate our encounter with God!

What hinders our encounter with God?

- God wants to communicate intimately with all of his children.
- This encounter is not reserved for Bishops, Priests, Deacons or even for the Religious sisters or brothers only!
- It is for everyone who lives in the proper context of their call.

What hinders our encounter continued...!

1. We are too busy pre-occupied with many things to hear him.
- The story of Martha and her sister Mary. (Luke 10:28-42)
2. Our ears are attuned to the world's sounds and not to his voice.
3. We are bogged down with the daily responsibilities of our work/ministry and have no time to sit still and listen to his voice.
4. Our will gets in the way of God's will and this brings desperation.
5. We can't be God's good stewards if we have no time to pray or to listen to him. "Pray unceasingly....." (1Thes. 5:16-18).
6. We cannot do God's work without the spiritual strength to do it.

What do we need to do to turn things around?

1. Have a regular time and place for personal prayer or family prayer.
- a prayer corner, church/chapel, prayer garden etc...
2. Choose a favorite prayer time – morning, evening, break during the day etc...
3. Decide on the time you will spend in prayer everyday, and stick to it to create a healthy prayer routine.

Our response continued...!

1. Decide on how you are going to pray and have your tools ready; Bible, Breviary, Rosary, Spiritual Book, Journal to jot down your thoughts.
2. Develop a prayer of the heart, where you talk less and listen more.
3. God speaks to us in silent, restful and solitude environments. (Elijah)
4. You don't even need to pray or read a Bible, just stop and create space for God to speak to you!
5. Solitude is a spiritual detox, it removes all things that stand between you and God.

Creating a Spiritual Hideout!

- In a world that is too busy, noisy, fast, reckless there is need to create a spiritual hideout.
- It is a place in our souls where we can lay our guard down, be ourselves and recharge our mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical energies.
- A spiritual hide-out includes a solid life of prayer of the heart, where we let go and let God control our inner transformation through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- *Song: In the Silence of the Garden, Jesus Knelt to Pray by*
<https://youtu.be/CJXkcRX4n40>

Sr. Christine's Humble Spiritual Habits!

1. Call Jesus to walk with you anytime you face a difficult situation. He will give you the courage to go through it with grace.
2. Saying the Rosary first thing in the morning. Mother Mary calms your soul and prepares you for the difficult situations of the day.
3. The Holy Spirit is our invisible friend, call upon him to offer you the gift you need at any situation.
 - Wisdom to discern what to do when facing a challenge.
 - Fortitude to stand up for what you believe in.
 - Understanding to make Godly choices all the time etc...!
4. Never miss out on attending Mass daily and on Sunday. You get a chance to encounter God in his word, in the Eucharist and in fellowship with others.
5. Our Guardian Angels are always close to us to help us stay the course.
6. Pray unceasingly and spend quiet time in prayer everyday!
7. Song: What a friend we have in Jesus