



FIRST-SUNDAY CONTEMPLATIVE SITTING

OCTOBER 2021

TIME-LESS

Sometimes, when we try to be still and focus, our minds are like the leaves of a trembling Aspen tree, fluttering at the mere whisper of a breeze. We are promptly distracted and discouraged by our attempts at tranquility. In a matter of seconds, we're sidetracked by a bevy of thoughts.

And yet, our attention to the now actually does awaken us to God's timeless intimacy, distractions notwithstanding, beautifully captured in the words of Sister Ellen Vincent McClain, OP:

*O God my God, eternal Everywhere,
Bright now of dusky time's impassioned voice,
Thou Granite beneath me, and around me Steel,
Thou Light before me, and within me, life,
Horizon of my limitless desiring ...¹*

God's life and light are present in our very desiring. There is no goal to achieve; there is no timer to observe. The mere awareness of our desire is "achievement" enough. God is present in and through us all of time: from before the 14 billion years of the universe to the moment of our present thought to a still evolving future.



There is no past tense or future tense for God. And all we have is now. And, secure in God's tenderness for us, we can simply rest. "The very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows." (Matthew 10:30)

*To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wildflower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour ...²*

Let us be still for a time, attend to our desire, and rest in God's now.

¹ McClain, O.P., Ellen Vincent, *Psalm to the Trinity*

² Blake, William, *Auguries of Innocence*

CONTEMPLATIVE SITTING

*Mindfulness frees us of forgetfulness
and makes it possible to live fully each minute of life.*
— Thich Nhat Hanh

Contemplative sitting is an invitation to

- attend to your thoughts, feelings, and emotions with an open heart.
- offer/dedicate your everyday experiences, be they joys or sorrows, comforts or discomforts to the care and safety of others.
- gently shift patterns of behavior that do not serve you or others well.
- become more and more a presence, a being of loving kindness and compassion.
- dwell in Holy Mystery.

Mindfulness Practice

Set a time of 10, 15, 20 minutes, or more. It is helpful to have a set time for meditation. Sitting in your chair or resting in bed, come gently come into the present moment. Begin noticing any sounds around you like voices in the hall, a bell ringing. Gently hear the sounds and let them pass on by. This is Mindfulness of Sound. Then gently focus and concentrate on your breath.

- Begin with taking three breaths, just normal breaths, breathing each one in and out. Gently keeping focus on your breath; you may feel it at the tip of your nostrils or sense the movement in your chest or abdomen. If you can't feel it, place your hand on your chest or abdomen and breathe in and out.
- Each time the mind wanders, take note of where it went, and gently return to the breath. If you do this 100 times, it is just fine!

Simple Practice

- Breathing in, I calm my body, breathing out I smile,
Breathing in present moment, breathing out precious moment.
- Breathing in Holy Spirit, breathing out aah.
- Breathing in the universe, breathing out amazement.

Awareness of your mindfulness experience is key. Awareness of being distracted, or anxious, or crabby, or peaceful, or happy is key with no self-blame or judgment about your experience. Awareness is key!

My responses to this First Sunday reflection:

