



Conference 1 | Beginning with Creation

Transcript

Hello to all of you who are listening to us. We are going to begin our conferences then on prayer and to live in the presence of God. This is the goal that we are suggesting to you – is to live more and more in the presence and in contact with God.

I would like to start from a very small passage from the scriptures, the book of Genesis, Chapter 17. Its part of the story of Abram, of Abraham. God had already spoken to Abraham in the Chapter 12. Its there where He asked him to leave everything and to go in the land of Israel. So also in Chapter 19 there's another moment, a passage where God is going to speak to Abraham. When Abraham reached 99 years old, the Lord appeared to him and said (when the Lord spoke to Abraham at 99 years old this shows us that its never too late) and God told him, 'I am God the Almighty. Walk in my presence and be blameless. Be perfect.' I believe that this call from God is also addressed to us today and God is inviting us to walk in His presence and to also allow ourselves to be sanctified by Him. God didn't tell Abram, 'Be perfect and walk in my presence.' He said them in the order contrary, in first order. He said, '**Walk in my presence and then little by little you can become perfect.**' Because man does not have a perfection that he can fabricate for himself but our perfection is given to us by the Lord. I think that this call is very, very important for us today, to live in contact with the presence of God. Obviously this presence of God is not always in a sensitive way that we can feel and touch but God is always present around us and close to us. He is present in different manners which we will speak of in this teaching. And why is it important to keep this contact with God? I think that someone who is Christian is not someone who just has certain opinions or he practices certain rules. **But someone who is Christian is more than anything someone who lives in contact with God and this happens through faith, through prayer, through love.**

We seek to put ourselves in a personal contact with God. Today I think this is something very, very urgent for everyone. We can give many reasons for this but I would say I think that in the times that are today, times very, very difficult that humanity is living, we feel that we are in need of a certain light, of a certain wisdom, of a certain teaching or discernment and we also need a certain strength. And that is not simply something human. If we only had our human intelligence I believe that we will be completely surpassed by the events that are happening around us today. So we are in need of this contact with the Lord to be able to receive the light, the wisdom and the strength of which we are in need today to face all these challenges that are in front of us in this humanity. Jesus said it in a very clear way in the Gospel of St John when He used the image of the vineyard and the branches when He said that the branches cannot bring fruit if they are not attached to the vineyard. In the same way **our own life cannot be fruitful unless we are attached to the Lord.** And I will add another thing, is that I believe it is only in this contact with God that we will find the peace of which we are in need.



There's a question that we can ask ourselves sometimes – where can our heart find peace today? We know very well its not always by looking at the television, its not either while surfing the internet. Its not there where we are going to be able to find the peace of our heart. Sometimes its even on the contrary that happens. There's all this informations that are coming to us from all the sides. Sometimes they put in our heart more anxiety and worry instead of peace and on the other side we know very well that when we go towards the Lord, when we spend time with Jesus and when we take a personal moment of prayer. This can be a time of adoration of the Holy Eucharist, it could be maybe the rosary that I pray quietly in the corner in my own room. Very often this prayer will end up giving us peace. Our God is a God of peace as tells us St Paul and St Catherine of Siena said, 'God is an ocean of peace.' When we have a true and real contact with the Lord, even if this happens in a very simple and poor prayer, we don't always need to make experience of something very extraordinary but if by prayer, by faith we make this contact with God there is always a grace of peace which is given to us because God is the God of peace. He is not the God of fear, He is not the God of worry but He is God of peace. I believe that through the contact with the Lord, through prayer, we can find this peace which we are in need of. This doesn't mean that our life will become very easy. We will definitely have moments of storms at times and that's normal. Like all the apostles have known on the Lake of Galilee. **But if we welcome and receive with trust the presence of Jesus our heart will end up by being calm and tranquil.** So what I would like to do now is suggest certain manners or ways in which the Lord will be present in our existence.

What is clear, obviously, is that God is present everywhere. He fills absolutely all the universe but there are certain means, particular means through which God will be more present in our life. There are certain paths where we could meet the Lord that we can practice. So I will list them in the various teachings that we will do, for example the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, the presence of God in the word of the scriptures and the beautiful reality of the presence of God in our heart.

But the first point of which I would like to say a few words now is the presence of God in nature, in the creation because I believe that there is a certain importance to that. The first word that the Lord addresses to man was the word of creation. There is certainly the biblical word, the word addressed to Abram, the word addressed to the prophets throughout all the Old Testament and all the words that were given to us by Jesus in the New Testament also. But we must not forget that the very first word that the Lord addressed to us, it was through this reality of nature and of His creation and it's a way in which God manifests Himself and He comes to speak to our hearts.



I would like to make an important remark before we continue forward and its valid for all the aspects of the presence of God, is that wherever God is present He is also hidden. This is not a presence which is immediately sensed or felt or seen it's a presence which is hidden, it's almost secret. It's a presence that is mysterious that is revealed to us little by little. We can take the example of the presence of God in the Eucharist, its an essential element in our Catholic faith and that is in the Eucharist, Christ is present in a way that is living, in a way that is real. This is our faith. At the same time it is not human means that allow us to discover this presence. If I take a host that has been consecrated and I do a chemical analysis on it or if I put it under an examination of a microscope I'm not going to discover this presence. What is going to help me discover this presence? It's faith. And it's a faith that is made alive by love. **When with trust, with love, I seek the Lord and I come near Him with faith and I believe in the teaching of the Church, little by little His presence will be revealed to me.** It's a question which we will come to again when we speak of the Eucharist but this is a characteristic that is, that tells us that it's a presence which is real but is not felt in a way that is sensitive, what is also true for all the forms of the presence of God.

There remains something here which is mysterious. It's true, sometimes we want the presence of God to be more clear and that the presence of God would be visible to everybody and that every person will be inclined to bow before this presence of God and to accept it. We would like all the non-faithful to be confounded with this presence of God but that's not the path that the Lord has chosen. Obviously at the end of the times the presence of God will be evident to everybody. Every knee must bend in front of God as the scriptures tell us but during the time of history the presence of God remains discreet. He is truly here but this is not a presence that is going to squish us. God sends us signs. God speaks to us with a language which is very humble and He has a desire to enter in our heart but not with violence. God wants us to be able to open the door of our heart to His presence but He wants it to happen in freedom. And God wants this relationship that we have with Him to be a relationship of freedom and of love, not like an obligation that squishes us. But it's a presence which is hidden, discreet and it's a presence that reveals itself little by little when we approach from the Lord with faith and with love. Its true that in front of the Eucharist most of the time we don't feel anything at all even if the Lord is truly present but when we approach from the Eucharist with faith and when we seek God and when we truly desire to know Him, to love Him, and when we want truly to encounter Him in a way that is living and real we perceive that that which was hidden finishes by being revealed. Maybe not every single day in a way that is sensible and strong but there are certainly certain moments of grace when we will feel that that was true. We feel a certain presence. We feel a certain tenderness and we feel something that touches us in our heart and it makes it that we believe that we are in front of a reality that is living. I say all this because I think it's very important to know that what makes God capable of revealing Himself, these are not certain rational proofs or scientific means but its our faith and its our love, its our desire. I would say that these obligate God to reveal Himself. **We need to bring God out of His hidden place so that we can really understand that He is really here.**



What I just said is true also in nature. When we contemplate nature, this world that's around us, this world that was created, every single person does not receive it like a Word of God. We have simply some scientific explanations and we end up saying it's chance, it's the laws of physics that have realized all of this and made it possible and we don't perceive it and see it like a presence, like a Word from God. But on the other side we see that in a context of faith its absolutely possible to receive this gift and to look at creation as a gift from God, as a Word from God, as a reality in which He is present. So obviously God is not present in the creation as the same way as He is present in the Eucharist. It is something that is totally different and we have to be careful to not adore creation as certain pagan religions have done in the past but we need to adore the creator. Because the bible makes us understand that the creator and the creation are two different things and that God transcends and He surpasses totally His creation even if He is the author of it because sometimes we have a tendency to think and to believe that divinity is the big ensemble, the everything that exists together but it's a vision which is not completely conformed to the biblical, Christian vision. We have to distinguish God and nature and adore God alone but what the scriptures tell us is that nature is a Word from God. There is a psalm that tells us the heavens sing the glory of God and that all this creation that surrounds us, the beauty of the stars, the beauty of the sea, of the mountains, the beautiful singing of the birds, the beautiful fields, the flowers, we are not sensed to adore all of them but we must like them, love them and receive them as a gift from God.

So this presence of God in nature it's a little bit similar to a painting from an artist. We should not confound or confuse the painting with the artist but its clear that in the paintings of the big artists someone like Frangelico, like Rembrandt or others, their painting expresses to us something from the personality of the artist. We can, in a little way, touch almost the soul of the artist and its true that this creation around us speaks to us, witnesses to us of the love of God and of His power or the majesty of the heaven, the majesty of the sky and of the mountains speak to us of the power of God. It shows us the wisdom of God.

There is a text from the scriptures that we read in the paschal vigil, I think it comes from the book of Baruch and it says something that I like very much that is very beautiful. It says that all of the stars that are in the sky, they are shining with joy for the creator. They are very happy that through their beauty, through their splendid beauty to sing the greatness of God. And when we look at the life of the saints also there was a great love for creation. Of course the most known one to us is St Francis of Assissi with his Canticle of the Creation but even St John of the Cross liked very much to bring the young religious to pray and contemplate in nature. And then there's another saint which we find he has a little bit of an austere personality like St Ignatius of Loyola. We, it's good to know that at the end of his life when he was really old he asked often to put him up on the balcony of the house where he lived in Rome and he looked at the stars and he cried when he looked at the stars because he saw them as singing the beauty and the power of God. **It's true that the more our heart seeks God, the more our heart loves Him, the**



more we end up finding Him everywhere, and particularly in the beauty of the world. I think for us this can be a great word of encouragement and of consolation.

I would like to tell you here a small personal experience. There were 30 years ago where I lived in the region of Rome and we were in a very beautiful monastery which was at, we lived in a beautiful monastery which was about like a 30 kilometers from Rome on these volcanic mountains which are at the southwest of Rome and we had a very beautiful look or view over all the region of Rome. On the left it went all the way to the sea and then on the right we saw the mountains, the mountain chains of Apennine and in front of us we had all the plain of Rome. And in fact the chapel of the community where we did all, most of our prayers was on the balcony of the house and so sometimes in the evening when we finished and came out from the prayers of vespers and we crossed the porch or the terrace of the monastery to come down to the place where we eat sometimes there were some very, very beautiful sunsets, very magnificent spectacles, very magnificent views. And I remember that at that period of time I was the one responsible for the community. There were approximately 30 people in the community, brothers, sisters and sometimes obviously I had a little concerns for certain difficulties for so and so person who probably wasn't doing very well or something like that so I had a little tendency to be a little worried because of these things. It happened to me very often when leaving the chapel and looking at these magnificent sunsets I felt really that God was talking to me through that. A little bit as if God was telling me, 'Dear Jacques, lift up your eyes. Look, look at this beauty. Look at these colors. Look at this sky which is enveloped and enflamed with red and there were all these different nuances of colors. Look, look at all that. It's me who made all this. It's My creation. And if I was capable to do such beautiful things for the world would I not be able to make beautiful things in your life? Am I not able to take care of your community? Don't worry that much. Trust Me. Trust in Me. Do whatever you can day after day but do not worry. Look at My power, look at My wisdom and trust Me.'

I think there is something which is also very important in our contact with creation. It's true that sometimes in our world we are completely cut from nature. We are all the time in front of our screens, our computers, our phones or maybe the storefronts. We are mostly in a world that is virtual any more and we are missing this contact with nature, with the trees, with the flowers, with all that God has created for us by His love. And we are often in our own thoughts, in our own preoccupations and we forget to look at the world in the way that the Lord has given it to us because the thing that is beautiful when we look at a beautiful scenery, for example, there is something very, very clear it's not me who made it. The beauty of the mountains, the beauty of an animal, this is not our work. It has nothing to do with us. **It's God who made all of this. So it is simply a gift. It's a gift that we must welcome and receive and it's a gift for which we give thanksgiving.** And also in it we contemplate what has been given to us.



What means also is that in this contact with nature we practice certain interior attitudes which are after all the most important for prayer. Its not about thinking a lot or saying a lot or doing a lot but simply receive. Receive this nature as the gift of God, to look at it with joy, to look at it with amazement and to render to God thanksgiving for this gift that He made for us. Sometimes when we are just taking a short walk by a lake or by a shore or to walk in the middle of a forest and we look and we listen and we feel the wind that is touching us and we smell the perfume of a flower this can be a very beautiful prayer. It's a manner in which we receive the presence of God. In faith. And to realize that it is Him who is at the source of all this reality, it is Him who made all this. It is Our Father who is the author of all this. Sometimes its the little children who are discussing at school and then one of them will say, 'My father did this' and the other will say, 'Well my father did that. Its my dad who is the best.' For us, too, we can say that. The One who made the whole world is our own father, He's our daddy. What power. What wisdom and what abundance also. And today we understand even the people in the time of the bible or even in the time of the Middle Ages because we have all these telescopes which show us these far away galaxies and we know that there are billions and billions of galaxies and we know that there are in, each galaxy has billions of stars. Well God could have just been content to make one galaxy. That would have been already amazing but instead He made millions and billions. He could have just contented Himself to make two thousand different animals or five thousand different flowers but instead He made millions and millions. This is the generosity of the love of God, you see. He surpasses everything that man can conceive.

There is a saint from the seventeenth century who said the following thing, 'It is very important that man makes a very high idea of the power of God because this is what nourishes our faith, our confidence and our love.' And I think that our contact with creation and our contact with nature, it can be truly a very good means to make this connection with God and His presence. I think that the image that we make of God is always very narrow and very limited whether it has to do about His wisdom or His love God surpasses everything that we can possibly imagine. I think that our gaze upon His creation can help us to understand all this. Sometimes this could be a word of consolation, very beautiful for us. Let us learn and know how to thank the Lord. And let us take advantage of those moments where we set aside our computers, our phones, our internet and take a walk in nature and look at the stars at night and to look at the sunrise and the sunset of the sun depending on whether we are someone who wakes up early or goes to bed late. We have a choice.

I would like to stop here and later we will speak more on other aspects of the presence of God but I think it was good that we began here. **Through the beauty of creation God speaks to our heart because all of this, He made it for us.** God did not have any other reason for creating the world simply and only for the joy of His children and its us who are His children so let us really know how to give Him thanksgiving and to trust in Him. Amen.