

MY EXPERIENCE OF THE RISEN LORD

A Prayer Exercise

Note:

An exercise meant for mature Christian people. Specially for persons over-pious and prone to popular devotions

The materials offered in these notes are rather large. Chose what suits to your needs and leave the rest.

This exercise has two parts:

Part I. Deals with ideas, concepts and doctrine about Christ.

Part 2. Deals with our "personal Christ experience"

Intent of this exercise:

- ✓ To clarify ideas about **'The Christ of Faith'**
- ✓ To cleanse our relationship with a Christ of an excessive pietism and imagination.
- ✓ To realize that now the "only" Christ we can relate to in our prayer life, is not the "Historical Jesus of Nazareth", but our "Risen Lord".

USES OF THESE NOTES:

- ✓ Faith formation groups
- ✓ Prayer Sessions
- ✓ Catechism class
- ✓ Talks, sermons, and exhortations
- ✓ As a short recollection

Requirements

- ✓ Writing material.
- ✓ New Testaments for all.

Step 1. Introductory Session.

- Welcoming the participants
- Hymns to Christ
- Opening prayer

Part 1

"Who is Christ to you? "Your Christ's Image"

Input – Teaching

Suggested Ideas for the Input.

- The only Christ that now is alive and existing is the Risen Lord.

- The Christ with whom we relate is the Risen Christ.
- It is not easy to relate personally with Him – as the Risen Lord - because we cannot have a direct experience of Him in our historical context.
- We cannot see him, hear him, and touch him like Thomas did.
- We now, can only have a religious experience of the Risen Lord. An experience that may transform our lives and make them "Christian", - Christ-like - , like Saul's experience on the way to Damascus.
- It is only by its effects within us that we may be able to judge of the genuineness of our Christ experience.
- Christ is not in the manger any longer, nor is he the child at Nazareth, or an adolescent, or a worker in Joseph's workshop, or a preacher.
- He is not any more in the Garden of Olives, or at the pillar, or nailed to the cross.
- All these things are no longer present, they are just past history!
- The "historical" Christ, however important for our Christian life as a source of inspiration, is no more. He is of course, The Resurrected Christ, Our Risen Lord!
- Christ is now glorious, immortal, and victorious.
- All the stages of Christ's earthly life, all the so called "mysteries" of his sojourn on earth have great meaning and value for us Christians: they are a source of inspiration, imitation, encouragement and strength to lead Christ-like lives.
- But, in the final analysis, when we now pray to Christ, when we relate personally to him, when we experience Christ, HE IS THE RISEN LORD whom we encounter, we pray to, relate to, and experience, not the historical one.

Question Hour. (Discussion)

- ✓ Get the reactions from the audience,
- ✓ Let the participants feel free to question and object.
- ✓ Initiate a discussion on Christ today.
- ✓ Many mistaken Christological assumptions may be cleared

Prayer to Our Risen Lord:

For a few minutes lead the participants in a group shared prayer addressed to Christ our Risen Lord.

You can make the subject matter for prayer the beautiful poem of Fr. Raines

O Jesus, Hidden God

Jesus, hidden God, I cry to Thee.
 Jesus, hidden light, I turn to Thee,
 Jesus, hidden love, I run to Thee.

With all the strength I have I worship Thee,
 With all the love I have I cling to Thee,
 With all my soul I long to be with Thee,
 And fear no more to fail or fall from Thee

O Jesus, deathless love, who sleekest me,
 Thou who didst die for longing love of me,
 White-robed, blood-sprinkled Jesus, embrace me;
 And go no more, dear Lord, away from me.
 O God, most beautiful, most priceless one,

Make me, O blessed Lord, Thy precious one,
 Make me, O glorious love, Thy precious one,
 Make me, O highest good, Thy chosen one,
 Make me, forever more Thy loving one.

My soul is dark away from Thee, my own,
 My eyes are dim in seeking Thee, my own.
 My flesh doth pine away from Thee, my own,
 My heart leaps up with joy to Thee, my own.
 My spirit faints receiving Thee, my own.

Where in the height of heaven is light like Thee?
 Where in the depth of heaven is bliss like Thee?
 Where in the breadth of heaven is peace like Thee?
 Where in the home of love is love like Thee?

With all my heart I give myself to Thee,
 And waiting wait, O King and Spouse, for Thee
 Till I am one for ever more with Thee.
 O sweetest Jesus, bring me home to Thee.

Free me, my dearest Lord, from all but Thee.
 Call me; O thrilling Love, I follow Thee;
 Thou art my All, and I love naught but Thee.
 Fr. Raines.

Second Input and Teaching

Suggested ideas for the Input.

- We have to be careful lest our Christian and spiritual life be based on fantasies, images, memories, ideas and notions of our own making.
- Without our realizing it, we may be praying not to the real Christ, but to an imaginary idea of Christ which does not obtained in reality.
- Without an experience of the Risen Lord, our Christianity may turn to be abstract, conceptual and cerebral, sort of theory or ideology.
- "Our" Christ may not be the real and living Christ, but a fabrication of our minds and imagination, a projection of our dreams and desires.
- Human as we are, and creatures of sense, ideas, images, memories, feelings, emotions, have a place in our Christian life.
- They are necessary and essential to verbalize, to express, to give flesh to our Christ-experience. But, they should not to supplant it!

- By trying to build our Christian life only on a world of concepts and ideas, they will stand as blocks to our Christ-experience.
- They will falsify and distort it, even if a genuine experience would take place.
- It is better to have a Christ-experience without having the means to verbalize it, rather than to have all sorts of theological concepts and images without the experience.
- Pious devotions are very helpful to recreate our Christ-experience, once we have encountered the Risen Lord.
- However, they alone by themselves, are not solid enough to build on them our Christian life and Christian commitment.
- They might take us to a religious world of "make-belief", good, but unreal
- Religious emotionalism may suffice only when our lives are lived in peaceful and non-stressful circumstances, but in times of stress and of real religious crisis, it will not be enough to withstand the crisis. Our faith may collapse!
- Cheap, shallow, emotional and sentimental religious practices in the long run may lead us to disappointment, despondency and to a crisis of faith, hope and charity

Question Hour. (Discussion)

- ✓ Get the reactions from the audience.
- ✓ Initiate discussion
- ✓ Let the participants feel free to question and object.
- ✓ Discuss the real but not sufficient value of our devotional practices such as: Novenas, Infant Child devotion, Jesus the Worker, the Precious Blood, Apparitions of Our Lady, St. Jude, St. Anthony, the Holy Souls, Etc. all these things have only a relative and secondary value.

Short Prayer to Christ.

Lead the group through a shared spontaneous prayer to Christ.

You may take St. Barnard's prayer to Jesus as the base of this time for prayer with Jesus.

Jesus, the very thought of Thee,
With sweetness fills my breast!
But sweeter far Thy face to see,
And in Thy presence rest.

No voice can sing, nor can heart frame,
Nor can the memory find,
A sweeter sound than Thy blest name!
O, Savior of mankind!

O hope of every contrite heart,
O joy of all the meek,
To those who fall, how kind Thou art!

But what to those who find? Ah! This
Nor tongue nor pen can show:

The love of Jesus, what it is!
None but his lovers know.

Jesus, our only joy be Thou,
As Thou our prize wilt be;
Jesus!, be Thou our glory now,
And, through eternity!

Part 2

My Christ Experience

Personal Work:

Saul's Case. Acts: 9/1-21

Ask the participants to attentively read the passage of St. Paul's conversion, namely, Paul's Christ's experience.

After reading the passage, ask them to reflect on the following questions (*They may take down some jottings in writing*)

1. What happened to Saul on the Way to Damascus?
2. Whom did he encounter?
3. What did he feel? What did he learn?
4. What were the effects of that encounter in Saul's life?
5. From then on, what did it mean for Paul to be a Christian?

Sharing

Sharing their jottings.

Clarifications, discussion and questioning.

Mini Input:

Suggested Ideas

A Christ-experience it just happens. It is a gift of God. It cannot be produced at will.

Comment on the text of Peter's declaration. (*Mt 16; 13-/17*)

No one knows the Son, except the Father and those to whom the Father reveals it. ` (*Mt 11; 25-27*)

We have to prepare ourselves for that experience by dealing with God in all sincerity and earnestness. We cannot wrest it from Him.

Such Christ experiences were given to Saul, Augustine, Ignatius Loyola and thousands of others.

Prayer, contemplation, concern for God's name, concern for others, and love for the neighbor, create a propitious climate in which such Christ-experience may take place.

It is a fact that many Christians had such experience, even they being "unawares".

By their fruits you will be able to judge them!

Personal Work. MY LIFE'S STORY

Prayer Time:

Gospel Reflection and meditation.

Invite the participants to spend some time (15 to 20 minutes or even more.) in personal and silent prayer before the Lord.

They can read again Acts 9:1-21 in a personalized way. Tell them to identify with Saul. You may lead them through a fantasy exercise based on Saul's story.

In a prayerful atmosphere lead them through a review of their lives, sort of a retrospective view of their Christian life, specially their prayer life.

Help the analyze and discover in the style of their prayer life how do they relate with Christ.

Reflection and writing down:

1. Have you ever had a deep, transforming religious experience? You may not even be aware of it. Examine yourself
2. Has there ever been a turning point towards God in your life? Remember, what was it?
3. When did it happen? How? What did it mean to you?
4. What effects had it on your life?
5. Have you, any time in your life experienced the presence of the Risen Lord deep down within you?

Write a prayer to Risen Lord that He, may show Himself to you and change your life.

Group sharing and Praying

- ✓ Share what you wrote (*Share only what you feel confident to share*)
- ✓ Spontaneous prayer
- ✓ Praying for one another.
- ✓ Hymn singing.

APPENDIX:

*A Reading from the Commentary of St Cyril of
Alexandria to the second letter to the Romans.
Sunday 6th week of Easter.)*

Som Saint Paul continues: 'Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.' It is as if he had chosen to say: The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and in the flesh he endured death for the life of us all. In that form, we knew him, yet from now on we no longer know him.

For although he is still in the flesh, since on the third day he returned to life and is now with the Father in heaven, nevertheless we know him above the flesh; for being raised from the dead he will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.