

Pondering in the Heart - Discipleship

Pope Francis recently released an encyclical titled "He loved us". It is a teaching, or really a deep reflection on the Heart of Jesus, the Sacred Heart.

Part of his reflection is on how the heart is the center of the person; it is where our feelings and thoughts come together to be given purpose and meaning; we ponder in our hearts and from the heart then comes love.

Now we know literally that is not where we process stuff in our body. But for the longest of times the heart has symbolically been the core for people. Its action can be felt, whether a gentle hand placed on our chest to feel the beating; or after a hard work out; when we are excited by another or scared we can feel and hear our hearts beat!

I sometimes think we have lost this sense of the heart, and this sense of pondering in our hearts. It seems many rush to judge, to react, to condemn and vilify, to assume in others what is simply not true; to impose their will, their fears on everyone else. There is little sense of wait, think, contemplate, assess - in other words ponder.

Imagine the fear Mary and Joseph must have experienced. Three full days of it, and of course we get the connection; three days of worrying about their lost child, not knowing whether he was in the caravan, with family or gone. Then their relief, and I would suspect a little anger at him for his action.

Then we hear of Mary pondering these things in her heart, and she will continue to do so.

Throughout our Liturgical Year, starting from Advent, into Christmas, with a bit of Ordinary Time, then Lent-Easter, then back into Ordinary time we are given in Scripture and our Tradition much to ponder, to take into our own hearts about who Jesus is, what he did and what he means for us.

This pondering, this contemplation, can deepen our appreciation of what it means to believe in our Faith, and inspire us to act, rather than react.

It means sitting with our hopes and dreams, our fears as well, all with the belief that God remains faithful to us.

I imagine parents pondering on their children. Hoping and dreaming for them, and then watching throughout childhood, adolescence and then early adulthood as a unique person emerges. Maybe not according to their own exact plans or goals, but nonetheless with love.

As part of the confirmation process families need to ponder together. We have these family faith events in which the whole family sits and goes through some questions. The goal is to help ponder and strengthen the faith.

I like to think that is how the Father ponders us too. God, desiring only the best, offering us the opportunity for us, and waiting for the person we are to emerge as well. Not micro-managing us, but mentoring the qualities we need.

Maybe we ourselves need to ponder on God pondering on us.

Maybe it will take away an unrealistic fear of God; and turn it into an awe of God's love.

Maybe it will change the way we approach life; less fearful, less reactive, more engaged, more proactive.

Maybe it will make us more grateful.

Maybe it will change the way we see ourselves and others; as true children of God, beloved; and beloved by God, then worthy of respect and dignity; no matter what we assume they have done or not done

Jesus lived his life in this way..always seeing the good and potential for good in others; especially those deemed unworthy by the so called elite. He acted on that love to heal, to forgive and to welcome; he acted on that love to give of himself unto death...so that we could know that in our hearts, we are so loved by the Father.

Ponder that.