



Journey in Lent

A note from Bethany House:

Sometimes we choose journeys that lead us back into our own lives changed--awake to the stories and conditions of others with whom we share this earth and our lives of faith.

This past week, in our Contemplative Prayer gathering on Thursday morning, we were moved by the reflection offered by Julie, one of the participants. We heard of staying awake to joy and sorrow, poverty and plenty, blessings and yearnings, and to seeing beyond the borders that often define us when we risk opening our hearts. It was a blessing as it always is to listen to and share the wisdom, struggles and hope that emerge as we pray in community. With our gratitude to Julie, we share her reflection with you.

Words from Julie, a fellow traveler in our Contemplative Prayer Gatherings:

I always save the readings offered up at the Contemplative Prayer services. I can't seem to throw them away. In March this year I went with a service team of women to an orphanage in Honduras called El Hogar. As we were preparing for the trip I found myself volunteering to lead our evening reflections -- something far outside my comfort zone! Then I panicked. I pulled together all the readings I had been hoarding up for the past year, photocopied my favorites, slipped them into my bag and tried not to think about the outrageous commitment I had made. I had no plan, no order, just a bunch of paper. But every day during our trip, something happened that directly brought to mind one or two of the poems or passages. And somehow I pulled them together in a way that appeared to have some forethought. It wasn't my forethought, however. It was the thoughtfulness of the spiritual directors at Bethany House. Returning to our relatively easy suburban life after living with the poorest of the poor, took some adjustment, as it always does. Guilt, impatience, sadness. But also, I carried back with me the joy I found in the children of El Hogar, who are getting a wonderful education, food, shelter and love. Trying to connect Honduras to my life and family in Massachusetts seemed too complicated. Was it okay to feel happy? To relax back into my comfortable life? Upon returning, I made my way, as I do most Thursday mornings, to Contemplative Prayer in the Chapel of St. Anne. During the silence I found time to sort out my conflicts. And I sat in the space where I had been collecting poems, writing one of my own.

Note to Self Upon Re-entry

If you are happy,
Rejoice in the light,
Delight in the mariposes, the smell of brewing coffee.
Do not feel guilty or unworthy.
But remember, you do not own your joy.

If you are comfortable,
Count your blessings:
Warm embraces, soft pillows, solid walls, and clean, hot, running water.
Do not pine for suffering.
But understand, fleeting niceties do not define you.

Somewhere below the surface
Of my happy, comfortable skin,
Rages a river of discontent
That will not reconcile the distance between happiness and despair,
Between my comfort and their suffering.

So, I counsel myself:
Be joyful in that which is lovely,
Sink deeply into the folds of warm blankets.
But never be content.
Be more.

Join us for Contemplative Prayer on Thursday mornings from 10-11:30 am or Contemplative Eucharist on Wednesday evening March 20 at 7:00 pm in the Chapel of St. Anne.