

Lent with Ruth Burrows and Sister Wendy Beckett

WEEK TWO: LETTING GOD'S RADIANCE SOAK DEEP INTO OUR BEING



Grace or Achievement?

On the Second Sunday of Lent we hear these words from the Second Letter of St Paul to Timothy:

"God has saved us and called us to be holy not because of anything we ourselves have done but for his own purpose and by his own grace."

With these words in mind, let's read and contemplate the following passages from *Essence of Prayer* by Ruth Burrows.

What we call our religious practices, will be shot through with self-seeking unless we are always little children at our inmost centre, expecting God to be utterly good to us.

It is well, for instance, to check our motives in regard to our celebration of the Eucharist and the other sacraments. Do we see going to Mass or going to Confession merely as religious duties, obligations imposed on us?

Why, really, do I go to Mass? Why do I go to Confession? Would I be afraid not to go? And if so, of what? Do we have an anxiety about our Confession? What we have to understand is that in the sacraments Jesus comes to us immediately, directly, to heal and transform us and bring us into full union with himself and his Father. We receive the sacraments, not to give something to God, but to allow God to do and to become everything to us.

Maybe we have undertaken some Lenten penance. What is our motive? Is it because a good Catholic always does something for Lent? Do we assume that penance is a good thing, that God is pleased when we do hard things for Him?

All this hardly fits the God Jesus shows us. Yet what God longs for us to do is to live in the truth Jesus reveals. This means believing in God's absolute, unconditional love, not in a notional way but one that transforms our attitudes and whole approach to life.

The Gospel for the Second Sunday of Lent is the Transfiguration.
The following reflection by Sister Wendy Beckett helps us to
reflect upon what it means to live transfigured lives,
to live in the heaven of God's presence.



Margaret Neve, "Angel in the Sky"

Using tiny specks of pure colour, Margaret Neve builds up scenes that have a sort of subliminal luminosity. Heaven is all subdued pinks and blues, earth – and here we pause – and look again. Earth is the same pink and blue, but in different proportions. Those rounding fields, those trees and bushes and houses and sheds, those rivers and haystacks and sheep with their shepherd – all are an inwardly glowing pink-blue. The angel in the sky expresses these colours fully, we could say more absolutely, but heaven and earth are profoundly alike.

Do we allow our own personal earth to be heaven? Do we see, in faith, that God in His beauty is as intimately our own as we choose Him to be? How freely do we let soak deep into our being His radiance? And seek it within, where it truly is?

There is a sense in which the angel is always coming, motionless overhead. Our part is to live in the heaven of God's invisible Presence. The angel is permanent in our sky if we live in the truth of Jesus.

Sister Wendy Beckett, *The Gaze of Love*, 30.