

## Home Fires

OK, OK, I love my wife and kids and dogs and house. But I am most at home before the One. During these days of Christmas, my eyes are fixed on the little baby in the cow stall; I bow in worship. He is the Lord. He is no mere extension of my religious imagination, nor a sentimental reminder of Christmases past. From the manger He burns with fire that unites crib to charismatic signs to cross. He is God, I am not, and as I bow I find peace. I am at home.

True worship results from gratitude but requires holy fear. My welcome of Jesus' coming espouses me to His Father in an intimate bond of love and at the same time makes me His son (Gal. 4:3-7). Only God could do that. A wise-man said that reverencing the Christ-child celebrates our own new birth. Yet if I fail to realize that this babe is the Creator/Redeemer of all then my worship is in vain. My 'home' becomes a house built on sand.

Godly fear is a forgotten value. Whiners who cry injustice selfishly trivialize real trauma, abuse and harassment; they lose their home. A real homecoming requires that we deny our demands and give Him highest place. We unruly sheep need to stop bleating and bow. Hear Fr Alfred Delp on godly fear: 'Man must learn again--really, personally, practically, and daily—to reckon God as the ultimate category of reality, as the decisive judgment of all that exists....We have lost this category [of godly fear]. We are no longer a people of clarity who know about this one Lord and who stand in simplicity without usurping the Lord's rights, without betraying our duty to Him, or bargaining. Fear of God...means knowing the absolute, inalienable dominion of the Lord of all.'

Only out of godly fear can we grasp the miracle of Him drawing near to us. The other day in Adoration (when Catholics adore Jesus in the Eucharist) I felt led to meditate on John 6:53-55 where Jesus makes explicit how He becomes our home: 'I tell you the truth, unless eat the flesh of Son of Man and drink His blood you have no life in you...For My flesh is real food and My blood is real drink. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides/dwells/remains in Me and I abide/dwell/remain in him.'

Wow. Adoring Jesus in tears over the abuse scandalizing the Church, I experienced a new power, a burning in my belly as if Christ-in-me was intensifying and would not be diminished by the devils of a few. Rather than forsake my Church home, Jesus was becoming my home in order to fight for His bride. I recalled Jesus' words 'Without Me you can do nothing' (JN 15:5b) then joyfully realized the converse: 'With Him I can do everything [He asks]!'

I prayed with new authority for the Church in her season of shaking. Delp again: 'The time of the great intercessors has come. Prayer does not mean some Quietist approach dispensing us from action and responsibility. To the contrary, this is a much harder principle of action. The time of pure action, consecrated from within has come. The precept of Ignatius...says that the interior life must fill and support the exterior life and make it fruitful....Today more than ever, action, commitment and achievement must unfold from devoted worship.'

Let His burning love infuse ours as we pray. Never alone, we can bear what He asks. And burn. Nothing less than His fiery love will grant us peace and pierce the darkness.

'We should not avoid the burdens God gives us. They lead us into the blessing of God. To those who remain faithful to the hard life, the interior springs of reality will be unsealed...The silver threads of God's mysteries within everything that is real begin sparkling and singing...

God becomes man. Man does not become God. The human order remains and continues to be our duty, but it is consecrated. And man has become something more, something mightier. Let us trust life because this night must lead to light. Let us trust life because we do not have to live it alone. God lives it with us.'

Fr. Alfred Delp's last Christmas meditation from prison, 1944.

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