

1. BEGINNING OUR TIME TOGETHER.

The point of any religion is to point us to God who is the point of everything.

Timothy Radcliffe, OP.¹

You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You.

St. Augustine, *Confessions*.

Let's open with some questions:

What are our main life-shaping desires?

What do we most want to do and most want to be?

What are the priorities we feel most deeply about?

God is not in competition with our responsibilities and our well-ordered desires.

What gets in the way?

- Aspects of life: compulsive desires: eating, drinking, health, exercise, physical appearance, sport, sex, drugs.
- Or: work, family, religion, money, the arts, social or political causes, entertainment, the life of the mind, psychotherapy, computers, and so on.
- All good things, but each can grip us, get a hold on us, and become an impediment to growth as a Christian.
- Overwhelming: Feeling overpowered or crushed.

¹ Timothy Radcliffe, OP, *What Is the Point of Being a Christian?* (New York: Continuum/Burns & Oates, 2005), 1.

- “The issue at stake is the whole shape of living. To attend to that when we are being overwhelmed is no easy matter. But it is hard to imagine any adequate way of coping that does not try to answer the big questions about life, death, purpose, good and evil.”.. The main task is to stretch our minds, hearts and imaginations in trying to find and invent shapes of living.”²
- So, how do I shape my living as a Christian?

1. By learning to see:

*I see his blood upon the rose
 And in the stars the glory of his eyes,
 His body gleams amid eternal snows,
 His tears fall from the skies.*

*I see his face in every flower;
 The thunder and the singing of the birds
 Are but his voice --- and carven by his power
 Rocks are his written words.*

*All pathways by his feet are worn,
 His strong heart stirs the ever-beating sea,
 His crown of thorns is twined with every thorn,
 His cross is every tree.*

(Joseph Mary Plunkett 1887-1916).

2. By learning to accept that:

God desires me! So very difficult to grasp. That God desires us, that God desires me!
 “Do we wake up every morning amazed that we are loved by God, aware that this is the ultimate in delight, dignity, self-worth? Do we allow our day to be shaped by God’s desire to relate to us? Are we ready to be stretched in our hearts, minds, imaginations, actions and sufferings in order

² David F. Ford, *The Shape of Living* (London: HarperCollins, 1997), xvii.

to do justice to this glorious God? Do we habitually see ourselves, other people and creation in the light of God's desire for us all to flourish? Do we simply long to enjoy God?"³

We don't have to go on an expedition to find God. God is closer to us than we are to ourselves, the very Ground of our Being, God is the One in whom we live and move and have our being. You don't need to go anywhere. We need therefore to find ways to open ourselves up to God's desire for us, for me, for you.

3. By learning to be:

Fr. Dismas, OCSO, Trappist Abbey, OR. Sometime, not long after his cancer diagnosis, Fr. Dismas received a prayer, sent to him by a relative stranger, this prayer became his prayer. He kept the prayer on the top of his desk.

Be silent.

Be still.

Alone. Empty

Before your God.

Say nothing.

Ask nothing.

Be silent.

Be still.

Let your God

Look upon you.

That is all.

God knows

And understands.

God loves you with

An enormous love,

Wanting only to

³ David F. Ford, *The Shape of Living*, 28.

Look upon you

With love.

Quiet.

Still.

Be.

Let your God

Love you.