

process of awareness overtake him... and what sort of temperament do you need to start being aware of God's real presence in the Eucharist?

The Grace to see beyond the demands of our day

Sheep are creatures which claim attention. Of all domesticated livestock they are the most foolish and are prone to sudden ailments to the extent that they often seem to have a death-wish. The less attention shepherds give them, the more sheep die and the less competent the shepherd appears to be.

Does this mean that Moses, in taking eyes off the sheep to give deep attention to the bush, was no longer conscientious in his shepherding duties? Does this mean that in focussing on God's presence and putting it centre-stage we relegate our daily duties and concerns to second place? Or does it mean that overall sight is greater? It is only when I am aware that I am in God's presence that I truly realise that it is a more vital truth that God watches over my daily concerns than that I watch over them.

The Grace to see Salvation

The burning bush experience is part of an opening of Moses' understanding to God's plan of salvation. He recognises and responds to the holy ('Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.'). The more time we spend with that which is holy, the easier it is to discern God's spirit, God's presence, God's invitation and God's salvation. So it was that at the presentation of Jesus in the temple Simeon, a man who lived constantly with the holy, with little apparent physical compelling evidence, proclaims, 'for my eyes have seen your salvation

which you have prepared for all nations. The light to enlighten the gentiles and give glory to your people, Israel' (Lk 2:30-32). In seeing the infant Jesus he saw and understood the fulfilment of all God's promises of salvation. Always ask to see and understand God's salvation as you yourself watch before the Lord.

A final Prayer

The burning bush event marked the start of a deeper following of God's call by Moses. Watching before the Lord enables our will, our emotions, our thoughts and habits to be open to responding to God's call in our lives with a 'deeper following'. Here is a psalm text to help with this:

To you have I lifted up my eyes,
you who dwell in the heavens:
my eyes, like the eyes of slaves
on the hand of their lords.

Like the eyes of a servant
on the hand of her mistress,
so our eyes are on the Lord our God
till he show us his mercy.

Psalm 122 (123):1-3

Acknowledgements

Time before the Blessed Sacrament is a series of leaflets produced by the Spirituality Committee in preparation for *Adoremus*. It is intended for individual reflection as part of a time of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament or Exposition. It could also be used with small groups.

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Time before the Blessed Sacrament

Watching

My eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared for all nations.



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Watching

As you watch before the Lord be forgetful of self, be absorbed by the one on whom you gaze and be open to grow in insight, hope and love.

'Watching' is a way of describing being present for a time in prayer before the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. In secular contexts 'watching' may simply suggest a commitment to attentiveness (e.g. when a sailor 'keeps watch' to ensure the boat doesn't sail into danger), or it may indicate allowing oneself to be absorbed by something beautiful (e.g. when parents spend time watching a new-born infant). Both of these ideas and others help us when we seek to understand how to watch before the Lord, but before the Lord there is so much more — we enter his presence and his mystery; he who made us in love, in his image, in his likeness, to find our fulfilment in him.

Scripture texts give us scenes to help. St John Damascene describes the Eucharist as 'a fire which enflames us,' so a good biblical image to help us in our watching is the burning bush >

Looking at Scripture

Moses led his flock to the west side of the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked and lo the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, 'I will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.' When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here am I.'



Then he said, 'Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.' And he said, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.'

Exodus 3:1b-6

The Grace to see beyond the superficial

In this scene God is present in the burning bush in an unexpected and, to start with, an unrecognised way. Bushes burn naturally in forest fires or when struck by lightning but how long would you have to gaze at a bush which is burning to realise that it is not being burnt up? And what sort of temperament do you require to watch it for long enough to realise this anomaly? What sort of temperament did Moses have to let that