

## Sunday Afternoon Readings

(By RIGHT REV. MGR. POWER, For the N.Z. *Tablet*.)

### I.—A QUIET HOUR WITH GOD.

Activity is not everything in human life, time must be found for rest. If the day is holy, the night is holy too—the night that gives repose to our tired eyes and wearied limbs, the night that folds her great wings about our face and sings her lullaby in ears that have been troubled by the noise and turmoil of the street. Now, if there is wisdom in bodily rest, spiritual rest has its wisdom too, for it is in spiritual rest that Heavenly voices whisper, even as gentle, wholesome dreams croon around the couch of the faithful toiler. Rest is necessary to the soul that it may have time for silent thought and reflection. Why are many of us so shallow, with little of high romance or spiritual adventure in our lives? It is because we seldom, or never withdraw ourselves from earthly surroundings to have a quiet hour with God. That was sound advice given by Thomas à Kempis:

"Shut the door upon thyself, and call to thee Jesus thy Beloved. Happy are they who penetrate into internal things, and endeavor to prepare themselves more and more by daily exercise for attaining to heavenly secrets. In silence and quiet the devout soul goes forward and learns the secrets of the Scriptures."

The secrets of the Scriptures are the promptings of God under which our lives are ennobled.

God speaks to those who wait for Him and watch. Read in your Holy Bible about little Samuel and Zaccheus! "The world is too much with us"; but God would wean us from its fretful and unprofitable fever, and lead us at times into a place of retirement with Himself: "Come into a desert place, and rest with Me awhile"! Come, and renew your wasted spirit and recover your kindred with Heaven! A quiet hour with God has inexpressible charms. Those who have never had many of them, have missed one of the purest joys of life. There are many who never have a whole hour alone, many who will not think; in them there is no reserve, no repose; their moods are like their movements; they are in the rush of worldliness, absorbed in the news, the gossip, the tidings, the counsels of the world, which are so petty beside those which the strong-sighted discover in the high regions of the soul.

Consider the restlessness, the freak parties, the dresses, the dances, the animal sensations that are invented to fill up the time of the empty-headed who are unable to think! See the vulgarity of wealth parading itself in shameless extravagance; watch the middle class, like jackdaws in peacock's feathers, entering upon the same parade; behold the poor ambitioning a display in which they will never be able to take a poor part! God alone can save the people from this pervading wickedness. He will hide them in the secret of His countenance from the distractions of men, and guard them in His tabernacle from the strife of tongues. His tabernacle is the Heart of Jesus, within which is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:

"He will make the desert as a place of pleasure, and the solitude as the Garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the sound of joy."

What Ernest Psichari found in the solitude of the African desert we may discover in the solitude of a quiet hour with God:

"A holy exaltation of mind, contempt for earthly goods, knowledge of those things that are essential, discrimination of that which is in reality good from that which in reality is evil; the kingly ecstasy of an intellect that has thrown off its chains and learnt to know itself."

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Our Lord Himself spent thirty out of the thirty-three years of His earthly life in the quiet of Nazareth, and now when He dwells again amongst us, it is from the quiet and silence of the Tabernacle He would radiate His unction and His power. So must we prepare

for the combat of life, so must we strengthen ourselves for any influence we would exercise over our fellowmen. And it is the vocation of all Catholics, "a royal priesthood," to exercise this influence—to save their fellows from the widespread evils of worldliness, to be in their regard "the light of the world and the salt of the earth." Grace and strength and wisdom for this must be sought in frequent quiet communion with God. The Apostles were eager to return to the work of evangelising, but their Master knew what they needed more: "Come into a desert place, and rest with Me awhile"!

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This quiet hour with God is not meant to be an idle hour, its silence is not the silence of the tomb. The great constructive forces of Nature are silent. Who has ever heard the dawning of the day, or the march of the sun through the heavens, or the silent processes of growth? Yet, beyond computation are their marvels of light and life and majesty. Mighty was the temple of Solomon, richest and grandest the world had so far seen, yet it went up in silence. So with us who are building a house of the soul, our hour of quiet must be an hour alive with spiritual labor, with labor lovingly undertaken and cheerfully performed under the kindly eye and gentle exhortation of our Master. The inward eye must be active, must search out every nook and crevice of the soul, must discover what is dangerous that we may cut it off, were it even our right hand; must find out what is necessary for our spiritual welfare and our last end, that we may take it up and do it, no matter what the danger or the difficulty may be. There must be an earnest reality in the study and pursuit of divine things after a clear and honest discrimination between them and those of this passing show, for, the quiet hour is for the purpose of the grand decision and the grand rejection.

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In this quiet hour we must place ourselves unreservedly in the hands of God, and let Him do His will in us. The block of marble is in the hands of the sculptor that he may fashion it into a preconceived image. Let God fashion us into new beings; "Create in us a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within us"! Finally we must pray, that, corresponding with God's designs, we may receive all the graces He has in store for us. It is to peaceful, silent prayer that the delight of God's presence comes: "My heart grew hot within me; and in my meditation a fire shall flame out." Let us lift our eyes from the sordid things of earth, and fix them on the Hills from which our help shall come. Let us ask God to speak to us in our hour of quiet, and give ready hearing to our ear. Habitual communion with Him will enable us to catch the faintest whisper of His Voice:

"Let not Moses, nor any of the Prophets speak to me; Thou rather, O Lord God . . . they, without Thee, will avail me nothing. They may indeed sound forth words, but they give not the spirit. Most beautifully do they speak; but if Thou be silent, they inflame not the heart."

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### ST. JOSEPH'S SECRET.

St. Joseph had a secret—and silently imparts it  
To all who truly love him, and would follow in his way:  
He learned it from the Son of God, and from His Blessed  
Mother—

The secret is, to please the Saviour, offer Him to-day!

To-day is yours. What other gift can equal it in value?  
To-morrow lies within the future—yesterday is done;  
But take to-day, and yield Him every hour as it passes,  
Ah, what a royal gift is yours when all those hours are  
gone!

There is the morning; innocent; the noon, with splendor  
glowing;

The quiet evening, with the fire on hearthstone burning  
low,

So life goes by—and when the sun doth greet the great  
To-morrow

You'll meet the saint who learned the secret centuries  
ago.

—GRACE KEON, in *Good Work*.

Paddy Monnock

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