

Cultivating an Attitude of Discovery

"God is Holy Mystery, beyond the horizon of our knowing and loving" – Karl Rahner SJ

"People travel to wonder at the heights of mountains, at the huge waves in the sea, at the long courses of rivers, at the vast compass of the ocean, at the circular motions of the stars; and they pass by themselves without wondering." – St. Augustine

The key to encountering God, as in relationships, is attitude. If we could imagine each day as an adventure, one to be undertaken rather than a problem to be solved, we would have less pressure on ourselves and be more willing to let go of expectations...because the path is uncharted and yet to be discovered. Freeing ourselves from our agenda and schedule, we create room to learn from our mistakes, and we become more patient with ourselves. When we seek to discover and not to produce, we are more open to encountering the Living God...who is *"Holy Mystery, beyond the horizon of our knowing and loving."* When we approach our day with a spirit of discovery, we can more readily experience God, for God is full of surprises.

Accompanying this *attitude of discovery* is *the willingness to take risks*--to be led beyond what is familiar, what is comfortable. When we are open to discovering and willing to take risks, we may still have thoughts such as these: "I already know what mundane things will happen at work...I know what he or she will say or how they will react...I cannot imagine anything else but this...God, I need you to do this and that...God, how can you be here in this situation..." But even amidst these thoughts, we still have an openness to being surprised...to having our eyes, ears, and hearts opened a little more beyond what we already know and love.

To pray is the most counter-cultural thing we can "do." When we pray *in a listening way*, we enter a world where we are not in charge and have little control. We are willing and able to be surprised, to be introduced to something new or unexpected. Whereas when we go to work, we are trained to be productive and produce certain results by accomplishing tasks and achieving specific objectives. We know what "should" happen and do everything in our control to ensure that these results are achieved. Yet, when we pray, we cannot make ourselves feel a certain way...we cannot "make happen" the graces we are seeking...nor can we bring about insights or understandings.

Genuine prayer takes a different attitude altogether from the producing mindset we adopt at work and in much of life today. It takes a spirit of discovery and a willingness to take risks. When we are open to becoming an explorer, we allow ourselves to get lost and wander. We do not pressure ourselves "to have it all together," or know where we are going, simply because we are in a strange land and foreign soil. We see ourselves as pilgrims, not as owners of the land or of the way.

Although the producing mindset is essential in the world of business or commerce, it

can be unhelpful in the spiritual life – to inner work. When caught in such mentalities, we tend to label and limit further understanding...we close the creative space that allows discoveries to be made. Our minds are restricted by imaginations thwarted, and our hearts trust less. We cease to listen for a deeper reality than what we already know. We see the world "as it is" and not "as it could be"--in God's expansive vision.

Producing mindsets see "should's." Discovering attitudes imagine "could's"...and a willingness to take risks allows us to explore these previously unimagined possibilities. Cultivating a shift from one mindset to another will help us be more susceptible to discovering God anew...God who is *"Holy Mystery, beyond the horizon of our knowing and loving."*