

The Presence of God

(excerpted from *For Your Love Alone* by Michael Syslo)

I have been reading “Little Steps to Great Holiness” by Charles Hugo Doyle. In the chapter on The Presence of God, the author refers to St. Vincent de Paul and how he focused on the presence of God throughout his life. I have included below that segment of Doyle’s book for your reflection.

...the exercise of the presence of God required two acts, one of understanding and the other of the will...St. Vincent de Paul was a wonderful proponent of this great means of practicing the presence of God. He tried never to let an instant pass without thinking of God's holy and amiable presence. Alone or in public, at rest or in the midst of work, in joy or in affliction, in the silence of his cell or in the bustle of the busy street, at court or assemblies, he was always with God, always united to God by prayer and love. In moments of stress thrust upon him by others, there was evidence of St. Vincent's retreat into the presence of God. He always made a delay between the question asked him, and his answer—a delay that gave him time to say: "In the name of God," and consult Him for the proper answer. St. Vincent made it a rule formally to recall the presence of God four times an hour. When the clock struck the quarter hour, he made the sign of the cross and raised his eyes to heaven. When he rode in a carriage, as he frequently did, he kept his eyes closed and opened them only to contemplate the cross on the rosary which hung from his cincture. So as to see nothing that would distract him from the exercise of the presence of God, he would draw curtains on the carriage in which he traveled. Walking on the street he observed the same recollection. On passing a church, he would enter and prostrate himself on the floor. He saw no one, but the onlookers were deeply impressed. Moses talked to God on Mount Sinai through a cloud, but his face shone with a radiance

that dazzled those who beheld the law giver long after his descent from that mountain. St. Vincent kept himself always in the presence of God, and there was little wonder that the children followed him, crying out: "Behold! The saint is going by."

To render practical the thought of the presence of God, St. Vincent had signs placed in different corners and rooms of St. Lazare reading "Dieu me regarde" [God sees me]. The saint used to say, often, that "the thought of the presence of God makes easier the fulfillment of the will of God: the remembrance of the divine presence creeps little by little into the soul and by His grace it becomes a habit; and finally, one becomes animated by this divine presence." ...

...In resume, then, the exercise of the presence of God consists in an act of the understanding, and of faith as well, in God's adorable presence in, through and around your body and soul, followed by the employment of the will in making acts of love. These acts of love should take the form of short ejaculatory prayers, such as: "Lord, it is for Your sake I do this"; "Thy will be done"; "My God, I love Thee"; or "Praised be Jesus Christ!" May I repeat that time ought not be wasted in using the imagination to conjure up a mental picture of God or His adorable Son, made man. After a fervent act of faith is made in His presence within you, nothing more but the affectionate motions of the will are required.