

Practicing the Presence of God

Dear Calvary Community,

This week a series of photos went viral in [this article](#) on Facebook: **Photographer removes our smartphones to show our strange and lonely new world.**

The first photograph is perhaps the most stunning, a couple in their most intimate of spaces, their bed, backs turned to one another, staring at empty hands.

The above article convicted me. What am I teaching others as a priest, a wife, and a mother by dedicating more of my presence to my cell phone than to most anything else?

Each week I participate in a contemplative prayer group. **For 20 minutes, we simply allow God to speak to us in prayer.** We practice making space in our minds, hearts, and bodies for God to pray in us. **Contrast that with the average of 2+ hours a day** I spend doing one thing or another on my smart phone.

What if we started to see our time as a gift from God and live as though every moment was precious? What would our eyes gaze upon and what would our hands hold?

Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection was a Carmelite monk in Paris at the end of the 17th century. He grew up in the chaos of the Thirty Years' War, and sought spiritual fulfillment in solitude - a kind of solitude we can scarcely imagine possible in our 21st century world.

Brother Lawrence wrote, "Now it should be observed that this communion with God is held at the very depth of our soul, at its very centre: it is there that the soul speaks heart to heart with God amid a wonderful peace wherein the spirit experiences the keenest joy. **All that goes on outside is no more to the soul than as a fire of straw** which, the more it flares, the sooner it is burnt out, and rarely and little do exterior concerns disturb the interior peace."

I think so often we get caught up in "fires of straw" — burning us up and burning us out. I've thought sometimes, "if I don't stay connected, what will I miss?"

The truth is, if we aren't connecting to the communion of God at the very depth of our soul, we are only continuing to fuel straw fires and willingly avoiding the heart of interior peace.

Turning off, disconnecting, turns out to be the key to our deepest connection to God and to one another. Want to commit with me to a life of greater peace and joy this week?

One way to start is by committing to turn off the technology when speaking with another person, preparing for bed, or when at any table. What do we do with that time? Maybe we could start by just simply talking to God as a friend. Or noticing what we are really thinking or feeling in the new-found silence.

Let me know how this practice goes for you.

Faithfully,

Allison+