

God Meets Us Where We Are



By Ana María García:

Recently I heard an interview with a Jesuit Spiritual Director. He recommended taking a moment to stand silently before God the Father before entering into a prayer time. It sounded like good advice to me, so I thought I would give it a try. I had no idea how difficult that would be.

I fell in love with the Father when I realized at the age of 12 that he was in love with me. He was irresistible. I was loved by my heavenly Father without expectations, unconditionally. *We love because he first loved us* (1 Jn 4:19). No one had ever loved me like that.

Imagine my surprise then, when many years later, I entered my little chapel and, as directed by that Jesuit, dutifully began my prayer time by standing silently before the throne of God. Instead of throwing myself into his arms, I wanted nothing more than to sink into the ground.

This is what I saw: an elevated, forbidding, concrete throne on which sat the Lord God Almighty, hidden from my eyes. I saw no blazing glory or myriads of angels, and heard no celestial choirs. Of course, the vision was of my own making, my own limited imagination, but recognizing that was of no help to me. I saw what I saw. And the only thing I felt was judged. What the heck? I could barely lift my eyes. I felt self-conscious and uncomfortable. This was not what I was supposed to be seeing or feeling. That much I was sure of.

Each subsequent evening, as directed, I went into my prayer time facing the same disconcerting image and clumsy stance. I called on St. Thèrése of Lisieux, who famously and regularly entered into prayer only to end up falling asleep in the Father's arms. I asked the Lord himself to help me rediscover the same love I had known since childhood. It was no use. I just wasn't ready for the throne room of God.

It may have been weeks later that I entered into my prayer time, and instead of finding myself before the throne of the Father, I opened the eyes of my heart to see, unexpectedly, a lush green garden. It was slightly overgrown, but it was beautiful, with wide-leafed plants and tall tropical trees, every shade of green (my favorite color). I was overjoyed. And then I heard the Father calling me, and I raced into his arms.

What happened? What was the difference?

This is what I think: the Father met me where I am. That's what he does. The Jesuit didn't direct me to the throne room. I inserted myself there in an effort to stand before the Father. But I don't belong there. I belong in the garden. That's where this lost sheep can be found. That's where the Father delights in me and I in him. And I meet him there every evening when I enter into prayer.



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