

Pastor's Column

Rev. Michael Ratajczak
michaelr@stmoside.org
758-4100 x100

"The Holy Longing—Part VI"

(Fr. Ron Rolheiser begins his book, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality*, with a poem, "The Holy Longing," by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

In April, I invited parishioners to share their thoughts as to how this poem spoke to them.

Enjoy the many and diverse thoughts! May they help you in your daily prayer and reflection.)

"The Holy Longing"

*"Tell a wise person, or else keep silent,
Because the massman will mock it right away.
I praise what is truly alive,
what longs to be burned to death.*

*In the calm water of the love-nights,
where you were begotten, where you have begotten,
a strange feeling comes over you
when you see the silent candle burning.*

*Now you are no longer caught
in the obsession with darkness,
and a desire for higher love-making
sweeps you upward.*

*Distance does not make you falter,
now, arriving in magic, flying
and finally, insane for the light,
you are the butterfly and you are gone.*

*And so long as you haven't experienced
this: to die and so to grow,
you are only a troubled guest
on the dark earth.*

Kathy Quinn reflects: The opening line of the poem, "Tell a wise person, or else keep silent because the massman will mock it right away" seems to me to be valid. I have found that stating my point of view with one who will not move from his or her position is fruitless. I will only settle into my need to be right and we all know where that leads us.

The image of the butterfly (or moth?) insane for the light is powerful...and it is necessary to die before we can grow—only a troubled guest on this dark earth. Or as C.S. Lewis stated, "its all shadows."

Did you know it was Goethe who first said, "We'll fall off that bridge when we get to it?" Years ago I had a boss who liked to say that when we were planning a risky advertising campaign. Better to try and fail than not to try at all.

Judy Smith shares: I have tried to convey my faith to my children who have seemed to turn away from Jesus in their adulthood. I praise the Lord who is truly with us and pray daily that they will return to their faith and away from the "massman."

When we search, we find God is always there, providing an unconditional love beyond human imagination! I know this

because one time in my life, I was a "troubled guest" living in darkness...a time of selfishness, sinful acts, and a loss of faith in our precious Lord.

At my lowest point I began to re-read God's Word, learned how to meditate and speak to God in prayer, and subsequently attended community retreats. My faith was being renewed, but I was still the "Doubting Thomas." I wanted to know for certain that our Lord was real. One day, while sunbathing in the quiet setting of my patio, a hummingbird appeared within inches of my face. I then experienced God's glorious presence and He spoke to me. I felt a total love, acceptance and safety, like no other! Then I knew and will never doubt again.

The pain is in the distance that I still need to travel, but the love I felt in God's presence sweeps me forward as I did die and started to grow, when I began the search leading to recognizing his profound Love and Grace.

Moving forward to me means commitment and doing what Christ would do, along whatever path he directs me. That isn't always easy. There are blocks in the way at times; however, God has guided me and protected me thus far. I know that I am in good (the best) hands.

Jean McCloskey comments: "I praise what is truly alive," (a quickened spirit). Sometimes it seems this is within me—or is me, or mine, but then again—more, it is of God and is God.

"Longs to be burned to death"...given over to sacrifice of self, longing for nearness or oneness—even to being consumed.

Because a tiny light from a "silent candle" does overcome darkness, darkness is broken and weakened.

"Obsession with darkness" (where I once lived)...once I moved freely...I thought I was free! Obsession was as unobservable as a fine thread or wisp of web which tethered me to darkness – in darkness...the entire ordeal of a worm in the confines of the earth in comparison to the butterfly flying in freedom.

Praise God! That tiny light "burning the silent candle" is pure gift—absolutely! (There was no light in me.) It was given that I see a hint, a glimpse of light. It is an awakening out of darkness—away from darkness—better yet, a way from darkness.

"Insane for the Light" Yes! Of course! One would be swept up to follow the light—succumb to it. I would follow that Light and give myself to it as if I belonged to it!

"Distance does not make you falter." Distance doesn't even factor in.

"You are the butterfly and you are gone." But I can tell you in faith, that within there is a transformation that lifts and causes desire (and so, efforts) to keep toward the Light.