

My Father's House

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Direction for Our Times

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Article 1

Start at the Very Beginning, It's a Very Good Place to Start

In the musical, *The Sound of Music*, there's a beautiful song that starts with the words, "Let's start at the very beginning, it's a very good place to start." As we meditate on Volume One of *Direction for Our Times* as given to Anne, a lay apostle, we can see that Jesus from the very beginning taught her exactly where to start - and that was, with Him. She states, "One day I began to work, having forgotten to pray. Jesus stopped me and said, "Pray. Your work must be Mine. To do that you must start with Me."

Jesus taught us that principle in the parable of the Vine and the Branches when He said, "If you abide in my and my word abides in you, you can ask for anything you wish and you shall have it" (Jn 15). For we should realize that we cannot do the will of God unless we know what it is, and we cannot know what it is unless He tells us. And He cannot tell us unless we listen. And we cannot listen unless we believe that He personally speaks to us. And He cannot personally speak to us unless we understand how He speaks.

Mother Teresa put it this way, "It is not possible to engage in the direct apostolate without becoming a soul of prayer. We must be aware of oneness with Christ as He was aware of oneness with His Father. Our action is truly Christian only insofar as Jesus works in us and through us with His wisdom, love and power. Therefore, love to pray. Feel during the day the need for prayer. For prayer enlarges the heart until it is capable of containing God's gift of Himself. And once we have learned to seek God's will in all things it will be a great means of sanctity for ourselves and for others."

One of the great classics of the spiritual life is entitled "The Soul of the Apostolate" by Dom Chautard. He emphasizes this point over and over again: listen, discern and obey. All activity should begin with listening. We must learn to get quiet each morning, to be alone with Christ, and simply say, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening." What is it that you want to say to Me? Where do you want me to go? What do you want me to do? How do you want me to act? Whom do you want me to love? How do you want me to praise and worship you this day?

And once you have learned to write down the messages you receive from Christ, you will discover what Anne has discovered. That the thoughts just bubble up into your mind. As Anne said, "It just happens, and flows. It's flowing now and I don't feel the work of it."

The most often repeated theme of the Bible is that God talks to us all the time. It's in the Bible more than 20,000 times. Open the Bible to almost any page and you will read these words, "The Lord said," or "Thus said the Lord." Some years ago, someone asked Catherine of Siena this question, "How is it in the Bible that God is speaking all over the place to almost everyone, while today, hardly anyone hears His voice? Catherine answered, "The reason is because then their prayer was, 'Speak Lord, your servant is listening' while today the prayer is often, 'Listen Lord, your servant is speaking'."

As the great John Paul II said so often, "Prayer is a reciprocal conversation. We talk to God, to be sure; but most importantly, we get quiet and we listen."

My father taught me years ago a simple poem that brings all of this out. It goes like this, "I rose up early one morning, and rushed right into the day. I had so much to accomplish, I didn't take time to really pray. Problems kept tumbling around me and heavier became each task. Why doesn't God help me, I wondered. He said, 'But you didn't ask.'

I tried to see joy and beauty but the day toiled on gray and bleak. Why doesn't God help me, I wondered. He said, "But you did not seek." I even tried to come into God's presence, I used all my keys at the lock. God gently and lovingly chided, "My child, you didn't knock."

So I rose up early this morning and paused long before entering this day. God had so much for me to accomplish, that I just had to take time to listen and pray.

Article 2

All Is Grace, Everything Is Gift

The very first lesson that God taught Anne is that everything is grace, all is gift. He said to her, "I did not come to you because you were worthy, I won't leave you because you are not." This is a very good lesson for everyone to learn, that everything we have and are is because of grace. St. Paul asks us, "What do you have that you have not received? And if you have received it, why boast of it as if you had not?"

The liturgy of our Mass teaches us, "Father, all life, all holiness comes from you through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, by the working of the Holy Spirit." Without Christ, we can literally do nothing. We cannot literally raise our little finger without Him, nor breath nor even write a word. If Jesus were to stop thinking about us, we would not simply die; we would go out of existence completely.

Anne learned that she was like a child riding a bicycle for the first time. "He, like any good parent, was running along behind me. He let go for a minute. This was for my benefit to give me practice at keeping my spiritual balance. He had never left me and would not let me ride into dangerous areas. He was with me all along. He would not let me fall, even though I felt like I was falling. I began to fall and He caught me. And then He said, "It was not a test, it was practice and you did not fail. You practiced. I'm with you. I'm teaching you. And you

are learning. Be joyful. I will never leave you.”

Once we learn to flow in the Spirit, we realize that Jesus constantly enlightens our mind, enflames our hearts and empowers our lives. He lives in our spirits and all day long He puts thoughts into our minds and desires into our hearts so that we can think and love and therefore act according to His good pleasure. We experience His spirit as a triple flow of grace: the prophetic flow, that is the thoughts that He puts into our minds; the love flow, that is the desires He puts into our hearts; and the empowerment flow, that is the empowerment He puts into our lives. And as we abide in Him and go with the flow of His Spirit, we live in His Kingdom. For He is Lord and we are the humble servants, just as Jesus said it should be.

Article 3

A Key Parable - the Vine and the Branches

One of the key parables in the Bible is that of the vine and the branches. Jesus says to us, “I am the vine and you are the branches. If you abide in me and if my word abides in you, you can ask for anything you wish and you shall have it. For this is how my Father’s glory is shown, by your bearing much fruit and thus becoming my disciples.”

There are two key spiritual principles here: one, that of abiding, and two, that of listening. In order to abide in Christ, we have to give Him the first place in our hearts. We have to go to Him first every morning. We have to give Him the first consideration in every decision and go to Him first with every worry, fear, doubt and temptation. We have to learn to live out of Him, thus making Him Lord of our lives. We have to enter into a personal relationship with Him, wherein we learn to listen and discern His voice.

Secondly, we have to learn how to listen. We have to realize that God speaks to us all the time from without and from within. From without, He speaks through creation, through signs, symbols, people and events and through valid science, theology and philosophy; through pope to pope, through bishops and priest, through the Bible, the catechism and the teachings of our wonderful Church, to name but a few sources.

From within, He speaks primarily through our thoughts, through intuition, sometimes even through a dream or vision. God’s most common way of speaking to Anne is from within. She is what we call an interlocutionary... The question may be raised, Aren’t we all called to be interlocutionaries? Are not each one of us called to be a sheep who hears His voice? The answer is obvious: Yes, we are. This is why Jesus and Mary and the saints are speaking to Anne so that she may show the way to ordinary people like herself.

This is what Mary said to Anne, “Jesus is waiting for you, my little one. I will help you, and show you the way. Pray more, even when you do not feel like praying. Pray always, even if it is just a simple sentence, a simple thought. We are slaves to your prayers, my dear little struggling souls. We hear a plea from you and we hasten to provide every assistance. Look closely to the answer to your prayers and you’ll find them. Never be fooled into thinking that your prayers fall on deaf ears.” (Vol. 1, pg. 94) As we advance in the spiritual life, we learn to

realize that the ears of God are never deaf. So often, it is we that do not listen. Plan to make time each day to listen to, to discern and to obey the voice of the Master.

Article 4

Thou Hast Made Us for Thyself

Almost everyone has heard the words of St. Augustine, "Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and will not rest until it rests in Thee."

The closer we come to Christ, the more the delights of this world grow vainly dim. Anne writes, "The world holds little solace. Often, there is no comfort to be found on this earth. No person can console me. No thing. No food, no comfort. I'm alone in a crowd even of likeminded souls. It's dreadful to experience, but the fruit is a spiritual leading with your chin kind of feeling, or stepping out into the darkness in faith. It does roughen you and I can see that now. I hate it, make no mistake. The people around me must benefit, though, from this proximity of mine to Christ." (Vol. 1, pg. 3)

St. Ignatius of Antioch said the same thing. "The delights of this world and all its kingdoms will not profit me. I would prefer to die in Jesus Christ than to rule over all the earth. I seek Him who died for us. I desire Him who rose for us. I'm in the throes of being born again. Bear with me, my brothers: do not keep me from living, do not wish me to die. I desire to belong to God; do not give me over to the world, and do not seduce me with perishable things. Let me see the pure light; when I am there, I shall truly be a man at last. If anyone has God within him, let him understand what I want and have sympathy for me, knowing what drives me on. Do not have Jesus Christ on your lips and the world in your hearts. My earthly desires have been crucified. There no longer burns in me the love of perishable things, but a living water speaks within me, saying: "Come to the Father!"

St. Paul summed it up by saying, "With Christ, I am crucified to the world. I live now, not I, but Jesus Christ who lives in me."

Article 5

The Indwelling Presence of Christ in our Hearts

One of the great insights that Anne has learned is that Jesus Christ lives in her heart and that He speaks to her often from within. Anne writes, "Part of the way this gift first became apparent to me was in communion. I would begin to approach the altar to receive and the voice would begin. This cheered me up and I was able to move more peacefully through the morning" (Vol. 1, pgs. 22-23).

Because Jesus Christ lives in our hearts, He has given to each one of us a new nature, that is, a participation in His own divine nature. He has given to us a new identity. We are in reality, other Christs! He has given to us a new mind so that we can think like Him with His inspired wisdom. He has given to us a new heart so that we may love as He loves with His great love.

He has empowered us with a new power so that we may continue across our time and space His redemptive, healing, sanctifying, and evangelizing work.

He has said to Anne, "My dear lost one, for you will find me waiting and I will solve all your problems. I can work in you in miraculous ways if only you allow me. You have sought other consolations which have disappointed you, now try me. I am here. I love you. I await you. I want to address holy souls. So often you become discouraged. You do not bear with yourself at all. I, your Jesus, have endless patience with your flaws and weaknesses. You must trust me to forgive you and overlook these human frailties. I'm not like a spy waiting to catch you at bad behavior; rather, I am your friend. Your greatest advocate. I applaud your small attempts at holiness. Along with the communion of saints, I'm pulling for you. My holy chosen souls. There is great work to be done. So let Us not waste time worrying over our humanity. I don't expect perfection. Please do not expect it from yourself and you won't be discouraged. You must walk with confidence toward me, always seeking my will. In the smallest details of your day, seek my will. I will make it known to you and gradually, you will live in a world that is saying yes to God. Hunger will disappear, the blackness of sin will recede, and little by little, my goodness will spread to all mankind. This is not impossible."

And so you see, because Jesus gives us a new nature, a new identity, a new mind, a new heart, a new power, he gives us a new vision that the Kingdom of God will come on earth as it is in heaven.

Article 6 **A New Mother**

We saw in our last article how Jesus has given us a new nature, a new identity, a new mind, a new heart, new power, and a new mission. But there is one gift He saved to the very last, and that is the gift of His mother: "Son, behold your mother." Mary said to Anne, "You must look for the road to heaven in small, lowly things. Your service to unloved or forsaken people, who cannot repay you, either with esteem, money, or even admiration, is what melts the heart of your Jesus and impresses your heavenly friends. The unseen service is to be desired."

Mary, who was the greatest disciple of Jesus, learned to listen, discern and obey Him in every circumstance. So as our mother, she is teaching us to do the same, ever interceding that Christ be formed fully in us. She gently corrects us. She said to Anne, "I'm here, child. Be at peace. You do not hear us as distinctly as you would like because you are not praying enough. You must pray more and Jesus and I can take over your life to a greater degree. I know you wish this."

Again, Mary said, "The gifts I gave you in Knock will soon become apparent to you. What happiness you will experience through your charity, love of neighbor and devotion to me. Try not to worry over this work, dear one. As Jesus said, it is his work and as such will be completed with very little effort on your part. You see that now, do you not? Some days will be more difficult than others, but that is always the way. Even for me, during my time on earth, it was that way for me. Souls are saved through our obedient children; regardless of the

difficulties they are experiencing. Please do not think that because you are struggling, your offering is less. On the contrary, during the times you feel you are making the least progress, we are moving you forward. Jesus wants you to be at peace. He wants you to radiate peace. You must pray often, little dove, and we will put this peace into your heart. Your smile will reflect us, your heavenly friends, and many will find consolation there. I am with you in a special way during this time and will watch over you closely.”

Each of us learns that Mary is truly our mother and that never was it know that any one of us, her children, who fled to her protection was left unaided.

Article 7 **How to Be Still**

One of the great lessons that Jesus and Mary taught to Anne is how to be still. For God speaks to us from the still small voice from within.

We live on two levels of consciousness. One is on the surface, the level of the ego and the marketplace where all sorts of hurried, frantic and distracting thoughts compete for attention. The other is deep within where the Spirit of God is praying. If we can learn to “go beneath” the outer self and center down, we could literally flow with the Spirit.

In order to become still, there are certain things that we can do:

1. Remove outer noise. Get away from the television, telephone and business around you. Go off by yourself to a quiet place.
2. Remove all physical tension by sitting comfortably
3. Tap into the quietness of the world in the early morning, or in the evening.

Remove inner noise:

1. Still any thoughts you have of things to do, by writing them down so you will not forget them.
2. Still thoughts of sin. Consciously confess your sins to Jesus, receive His forgiveness and resolve to go to confession, if need be. Be bathed in the Blood of His forgiveness.
3. Still fluttering thoughts by focusing on Jesus. Say His name, *Jesus*, over and over again, in time to your breathing.
4. Try to get in touch with your heart. Begin singing softly and listen to the spontaneous song bubbling up from your heart.
5. Driving a car or waiting at a red light is a wonderful time for quiet prayer. Some thoughts will begin to bubble forth such as: “My beloved child, listen carefully. All is well. Look only to Me. Listen to Me. I will guide you gently and for always. Stop. Look. Listen. Stop your frantic activity. Look unto Me. Listen to My words.”

Write what comes to you in a spontaneous flow to be discerned later with Scripture, a spiritual director or friend in the Lord.

Article 8 **How to Listen**

The great lesson that Anne teaches us is that Jesus speaks to us all the time, if only we would learn to listen. But how does one go about listening. First of all, by realizing that God has a plan for your life that He reveals step-by-step and even moment-by-moment. Yes, God speaks to each one of us all the time.

Externally, He speaks through creation (a sunset, flowers, etc.), through the Bible, through our pope, bishops, priests, through signs, symbols, life experiences, through husbands, wives, children and even through our failures.

Internally, He speaks through our thoughts, through intuition, through our deepest desires, our dreams, and sometimes through visions.

But God speaks to us most frequently through our thoughts. Jesus lives in our hearts as a person. By His Spirit, he communicates to us by inspiring our minds. He plants thoughts and insights into our minds. This in-spir-ation (in spirit) "sounds" like the flow of spontaneous insights and understanding that flows into our minds, especially at prayer. The mind is God's receiver of His messages. Through the ear or eyes we receive His external words. Directly through spirit to mind, we receive His internal illumination.

Following are six keys to hearing God's voice effectively:

1. Quiet yourself. Go off by yourself to a quiet place, sit in a comfortable chair and pray to the Holy Spirit to quiet your mind of all the worldly thoughts (i.e., the marketplace, egotistical, worrying, and negative thoughts that tend to fill it.). Say an Act of Contrition asking Jesus to forgive you of all your sins as you forgive all who have hurt you for the Lord wants us to approach Him with pure hearts.
2. Focus on Jesus. Get an image of Jesus in your mind or repeat the name "Jesus" over and again in your mind until you are absorbed in Him. Then ask Him to speak to you through your thoughts and intuitions.
3. Be aware now of the flow of spontaneous thoughts that come into your mind. Notice how they just seem to bubble up from within.
4. In a spontaneous flow, write down the messages you receive in a journal. Have faith that God is answering your prayer. You have asked, now receive in faith.
5. Sort out or discern with Scripture or a spiritual person if the messages you are receiving are from the Holy Spirit, from you, or an evil source. Follow the principles of discernment.
6. Once you are relatively certain (remember it's a faith journey) that something you received is of God, step out in faith and do it.

