

ACIM Practices during Lent

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Week Four: Close Encounters of the Loving Kind

Last week we learned what sets us free from the human condition is to recognize that we are not human but divine spirit. As much as we may want to embrace the idea that we are divine spirit, we do not accept that spirit is *all* of who we are. We are still entrenched in our identity as a body. Here is a simple exercise to find out if that's true. If someone were to ask, "Who are you?" would you respond with your name, your roles (mother, teacher), and your personality traits? If you just ended a conversation with someone and a friend asked you, "Who were you talking to?" Would you describe them in the same way? If you are divine spirit and the body is not part of your identity, the only answer to the questions "who are you?" and "who are they?" is, "I (they are) am the divine spirit of God"- period. There is nothing else needed because this statement "describes you to a tee". Who is the "I" in this statement? It's not the body- the body is a covering made to hide our divine spirit. The body is illusion; the spirit is what the illusion is hiding. We can believe we are a body and imagine all kinds of experiences that seem to prove we are a body, but no amount of pretending or imagining can make it true. If an actor is playing the role of a murderer does the part he plays have anything to do with who he really is? If a three year old is engaged in imaginary play and pretending to be a mom, is she really a mom? If the Son of God is pretending to be Patti, or Sue or Michael, does pretending make it true? We might feel relief when realizing that we cannot change who we are but we still have a dilemma. We are caught up in our imaginary play and continue to *believe* we are a body. How than, can we change our belief about who we are and get to know our Self as divine spirit?

If we are looking for a way to be free of the body identity and experience ourselves as divine spirit so we may be in a constant state of peace and joy, we need look no further than our daily encounters with each other. Yes, that's right....it is your *brother* who can set you free from the concept of a body and restore to you the awareness of your divine spirit! Remembering that the world acts like a mirror showing us what we believe; seeing your brother as divine spirit will reflect back to you who you are. The Course calls this a holy encounter. If we encounter an "other", recognize that the body is hiding their divine spirit and "see" through the eyes of Holy Spirit the Son of God, we will learn what we look like as a holy Son of God. (*As my wise daughter once asked, "before mirrors were invented how did someone know what they looked like?"*) In this **holy encounter** where we meet the same Self, we "see" ourselves as something other than a body and thus we begin to change our belief about who we are.

How do we have a holy encounter? The first thing we must do is free the moment of our own ideas. When we are with someone, we believe we are talking to a body named (name), who is our (friend, mother, daughter). During this encounter we hold within our mind our past experiences with them, the meaning of their words, judgments and even our ideas of what they are thinking! If holiness is to be "seen", we must be willing to empty our minds of what is blocking our view. The best demonstration of a holy encounter can be seen in Jesus' earthly life. As he passed by, he healed many of their false body concept by not having anything in his mind to block his view of their divine spirit. That is how he "*saw the face of Christ in all his brothers and remembered God.*" (C.5.2:1)

If we are willing, all of our encounters can be a source of joy and an experience of divine spirit instead of a source of emotional triggers! "*To think how many opportunities you have had to gladden yourself, and how many you have refused.*" (T.4.IV.8:1) Imagine making all of our encounters throughout the day, holy encounters. Instead of driving to work and seeing obstacles, we would see holy brothers. Instead of exchanging pleasantries throughout our day, we would exchange joy. Instead of sharing confusion, conflict and judgment in our homes, we would share holiness. The Course teaches that it is actually quite simple to have a holy encounter once we realize **who** we are encountering. This week we welcome the opportunity to be glad and joyous by following the simple practice outlined below.

Week Four Practice:

“When you meet anyone, remember it is a holy encounter. As you see him you will see yourself. As you treat him you will treat yourself. As you think of him, you will think of yourself. Never forget this, for in him you will find yourself or lose yourself. Do not leave anyone without giving salvation to him and receiving it yourself. For I am always there with you, in remembrance of you.” (T.8.III.4:1-8)

Morning and Evening Prayer:

You have given us the way to see ourselves as divine spirit. We need only look to each other to be reminded of our holiness. This reunites us with You and to the Oneness of all. We ask that you be present to us in all of our encounters. We hear your words now and remember them as we greet our brothers and sisters on our journey home: Behold. This is the one Whom Heaven cherishes, the angels love and God created perfect. Look beyond what the body’s eyes behold to the light that is their reality. When you choose to see a brother as yourself, you invite the light into the darkness. Look at the loveliness and beauty that is reflected from this Light. See them as a mirror and let it reveal Your light that is beyond the solid form. Honor and Thanksgiving is given to you for you have asked for Heaven to be restored to your mind and because of this the world is lit up with miracles. Amen.

Close Encounters of the Loving Kind Practice:

“One instant spent together with your brother, restores the Universe to both of you.” (T.18.VII.5:3)

(Cut this out and take it with you)

The Quick-Step Practice of a Holy Encounter:

Desire Holiness - Free the Moment - Detach from What it Looks like - Trust - Don’t Control - Listen

We set the process in motion!

- You determine what it is you see based on what you desire or want to see. “I wish to perceive holiness”
- *“Yet the wish for other experiences will block its accomplishment because God’s Will cannot be forced upon you, being an experience of total willingness.” (T.8.III.2:3)*

When you find that your desire is for something else.

- Do not judge- accept where you are right now
- Recognize you are free to choose what experience you will have.
- Question: Do you want to continue to look on the darkness?
- Choose again- by desiring the goal of true perception
- Call upon His strength. *“Pause a moment, as He tells (you), “I am here.” (W.153.19:5-6)*

Free the moment of all that would get in the way of your “seeing”:

“An instant spent without your old ideas of who your great companion is and what he should be asking for will be enough to let this happen.” (T.31.II.10:1)

Let go of any needs or changes you want to happen (detach from what it will look like).

Trust that this way of seeing is available to you.

Don’t control the process - let the Holy Spirit give you the means to see past the body to the divine spirit in their mind.

Listen for inspired action.

“He will tell you exactly what to do to help anyone He sends to you for help and will speak to him through you if you do not interfere.” (T.9.V.8:8)