

Pastor's Column

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“The Holy Longing—Part V”

(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.*

Ann Buko comments: Don't say some things to just anybody, because most people won't understand and will only make a joke of it. I can't help but praise life, true life that is, when I look around, especially when I travel, and see God's presence in what has been brought into being through creation. It stirs up a burning love which is contagious, and which continues to search for its source and cannot be satisfied until you are absorbed in God's consuming love. Touching a bit of that love in others, however, urges us on.

“Love nights” are when we can experience not only human love but the meaning of eternal love. It brings peace and tranquility when one is united with the beloved, and the power of creative love is born again in that experience. A kind of light, like that of a flickering candle envelopes you as you experience creation happening in you in that moment, and it is the light of the awesome Creator.

Things of earth are no longer an attraction now. Now it is union with God in love and in light that draws you into another realm.

There is no time or space in contemplation of God, only eagerness to reach the light. And when one reaches the point of breaking through to that experience, it's like floating and gliding, and it is the light that effortlessly draws you into itself, into another level of existence.

God is the experience that awaits us. If we love for ourselves and not for God, who draws ever closer, if we have not yet experienced God by dying to ourselves and loving others, and living in God, earth will seem dark. We would not see that God is inviting us to greater life through the experience of love, which is emptying of ourselves, and the only way to grow.

We grow by a kind of death to whatever ties us to earthly things, allowing us to live in “The Light,” to fly to the consciousness of our real home in heaven. Otherwise it is dark, and troubles come easily, and we don't even realize that our stay here is only a short one.