

Wednesday meeting – 18th January 2017

Hosting the presence of God - 3

The nuts and bolts are getting into place for the Feast of Pentecost to be celebrated in Rome.

We are putting things together here. [Those who haven't yet joined in, I would like to invite you, make that effort.](#) We go on holidays, we sacrifice money to do other things - this is a once in a lifetime opportunity. It is the 50th year jubilee celebration with His Holiness, the Pope himself. I'm sure most of us won't be there for the next one, which is in another 50 years. Most of us will be in heaven, so we can join in from there.

So make this an opportunity to join us. You can talk directly to superlink and they are organizing the logistics. 200 people have enrolled by now from CRL. It was a dream that God put into my heart that those who are working fulltime could be taken there for that celebration and join in. It looks as if God is fulfilling that dream, little by little.

God is never early - that I know - but He is never late either. He is right on time.

Sometimes we get jittery when God is waiting for the right time, but we trust the Lord and we know that He will bring us all together. So take a step of faith and join us for the programme in Rome. You will be able to find more details from superlink.

On the 28th and 29th, we are having the servers retreat. We have two servers

retreats for a year. We would like you to join us. People are joining us from all over the country for those two days. It is not just for those who have identified themselves as servers, but even those who would like to serve - please talk to Tabor. There is an expense involved because we can't look after people for two days on thin air yet - I'm sure in the future we can feed them on air and keep them for a month.

Those who would like to contribute and sponsor those who are coming from distant places like Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Badulla, Passara - various places whose financial capacity is limited. What we do is, like in the early church, those who can support those who can't. When we do that, God gives us a blessing of His own fulfillment. So I'm sure some of you will be led to sponsor some people to the meeting. But that doesn't excuse you from not coming! Join us in the two days - details will be given to you when you talk to Tabor.

We are putting out a booklet on the 5 methods of prayer that you can use for praying and touching the experience of the Lord.

Now I realize how all our set prayers emerged. In the history of the church, at one time or the other, people needed to experience God, touch Him and so someone designed a prayer. After sometime, people stopped listening to the prayer, but they said it anyway. So a lot of people no longer listen to what they are praying, but they think that reciting it is going to help them. It is much better than not saying any prayers, but there are methods of reaching into the heart of God.

That is what these young professionals are doing on a Monday evening. Last Monday I found out, over 50-60 young men and women met together to learn how to pray. I was talking to two young men who are in one of our support groups and one was telling me that he has made a commitment to serve the Lord for one year. I just asked him about his prayer life and he casually said, "I pray three hours a day." I was challenged by this, and he said it in such a casual form. He was worried that he was skipping one day of the seven. I think people are happy when they can pray one day of the seven and skip the six. Here we have the grace from God - young men and women who are learning to live by the power of God and to release that power into the lives of people.

So we have the recordings, we have the book - the book will be published very soon. Make use of these tools to have a personal relationship with Jesus

You don't have to worry too much about your life after that because He handles it for you, and you live in a lot of internal space, freedom and joy.

I'm continuing the theme from the last few weeks: Hosting the presence of God.

We saw the basic rule - God works in partnership.

I must qualify it because theologically that isn't accurate, since God is omnipotent and He is all knowing. When I was a child I had a problem and I used to ask my mother first and then everyone used to get annoyed. At that time I was convinced I was going to hell, even at my smallest days. My problem was: If God knows everything and He knows that I, Lalith, am going to hell, why on earth did He create me? He could have created someone else! Isn't He responsible for my going to hell? They used to tell me to get out and not try to be too smart. It was only later I found out that even they didn't know the answer.

So there is this beautiful concept: While He is omnipotent and all knowing, He has chosen to work in partnership.

How do we know that? You only have to read the Bible to see it.

- It started with Adam and Eve. In the story of Adam and Eve, after He created them, He asked them to name the animals. That is participation and sharing His work. He didn't name them and give them to Adam and Eve - He asked them to name them. Then He said, "I am appointing you to oversee creation." This is partnership.

If you take any character in the Bible you will see that God could have acted, but He chose every time to act through a human person.

Next week I will do it in detail when we do the reflection of the two Moses'. There are two Moses' in the Bible - the Moses of the Old Testament and the Moses of the New Testament, who is Jesus Christ. You will see that God comes to Moses and says, "I have heard the cry of my people and I have seen their suffering and I have come to save them." Moses could have asked a very fair question, "So why don't

you go ahead and do it? Why have you come to see me?" Then God says, "You go." There is a flaw in the logic. God wants to go there but He has come to see Moses. Then Moses says, "How can I? I'm only a man and I'm having so many issues with pharaoh himself." *God says, "I will be with you."*

It looks as if, for God to visit Egypt, He needed a vehicle - a host. We host bacteria in our system. A lot of bacteria travels all over the place with us. When bacteria isn't good enough you need to have more bacteria. You do that by eating yoghurt because yoghurt is actually made with bacteria. Then you take the good bacteria and the good bacteria fights the bad bacteria inside. When you eat pieces of meat and can't bite it, you swallow it. Have you ever thought what happens to the piece you can't bite? The bacteria breaks it down - that's the support the bacteria gives you inside your system.

We are hosts to bacteria but God seems to be wanting a host to go to Egypt.

Why? God is Spirit and to enter the material world He has chosen to work through a divine-human cooperation.

You can see it in the New Testament with the Blessed Virgin Mary. When I pray I get these thoughts that jump into my mind, "Maybe Jesus and the Father would have had a discussion - why should I go through this long period of childhood and growing up? Why can't I go fully grown to Jerusalem like an angel? Michael, Gabriel, Raphael are all fully hyper. They descend on to the earth and they appear. An angel appeared to Ezekiel, Isaiah, Zechariah - fully grown.

Jesus could have appeared in Jerusalem fully grown and started preaching and everyone would have listened to him.

But that's not His style. The angel comes to the Virgin Mary and there is divine-human cooperation. "Will you carry the Son of God in your womb? Will you host His presence?" The Blessed Mother says, "Let it be done unto me according to Your word." She is hosting the presence of God. She carries Jesus and when she goes to meet Elizabeth, the presence of God inside her and upon her jumps on to Elizabeth and Elizabeth begins to prophesy. Then John the Baptist who was inside the womb, begins to move in acknowledgement of the visit of the Messiah.

Once you host the presence, you carry Him into the world. The world needs God.

Who can take God into the world? Those who are hosting His presence. That's you and that's me. Someone can say, "Nobody in our house listens, nobody in our office listens, nobody I know listens." We are talking about Jesus and nobody is listening. **Hosting the presence is not just talking about Jesus.**

The problem with us is, we talk about Jesus but behave like His enemy - the devil.

We say all the terrible things and then we say, "Why don't you come and join us at the meeting?" Hosting the presence is not carrying Jesus in your words. It is another way.

I can give you a beautiful example I've experienced in my own life, and that is the experience of my mother. She died a few years ago and she was a great woman of God. When we were children, what we experienced was, she also had a great gift to complain. My mother complained about everything - she was unhappy about this and that and she didn't mind explaining it all to us children and telling us why she seems the most unfortunate person who ever lived.

She used to work in the church and clean the benches and serve in the church like nobody. She would say, "Why don't you come?" But nobody went. It's only now I understand what had happened. Though she was doing God's work, she was projecting a broken, difficult, painful spirit. A lot of people can do God's work and be like this as well.

Until one day, when the Pubuduwa came there in 1975, she went for these talks. Suddenly I saw another person at home. She was polishing the floor and singing a hymn, she was always in a good mood, happy, relaxed and had freedom in her heart. I was the analyst and I was analyzing the whole thing and I realized something had changed inside her - she was hosting the presence of God by her peace, by her freedom, by her relaxation, by being simply happy in the presence of God. She was hosting the presence and I was seeing what God was doing in her life.

My younger brother who was 14 years old at the time - looked too happy to be real and at first I thought he was cray. He was so into this thing and they had said, "Bring someone, evangelize to someone." There was a mad man who used to walk down our road. Suddenly we found him seated in our house. I asked where the mad man had come from and my brother had brought him.

The change was a result of being baptized in the Holy Spirit and having God living inside of you.

- You don't consciously host His presence - you do it unconsciously. You aren't trying to host the presence and saying, "I must show I am a serious guy. Only then will they think that God is real." God is not interested in such people. Be at peace, find freedom, enjoy His peace in your life - and you start hosting His presence to other people.

How do you do that?

1. **First of all us need to have a divine encounter. For most of us, the divine encounter has come during the four step retreat. We have been baptized in the Holy Spirit.**

There is a guy who drives our vans and I was talking to him. He isn't a Christian but he is soon to be one. Someone had sent him to one of our meetings, he had gone through the four step retreat, been baptized in the Holy Spirit and then he went home. When he went home, his mother and sisters thought something was seriously wrong with him. So they called the police and told them that he had gone mad and that something was wrong with him. They took him to the asylum and kept him there because they couldn't understand what had taken place, because they didn't have any background of Christianity. The transformation inside him shook them.

But something amazing happened: He walked out of the asylum. When I asked him how he did that

he said, "The Lord said, 'Look to the left.' I looked to the left and the gate was open so I walked through. The man at the gate asked me where I was going and I said I was going home and he said okay." Just like the doors were opened in the New Testament.

Today he serves with us beautifully and walks in the journey of the Lord, because he is hosting the presence. For you to do that you need to be baptized in the Holy Spirit - that is number one.

2. **After that you need to renew the experience.** God has given us three ways to do that. We have been given the sacraments and some sacraments we can take only once: Baptism, confirmation, matrimony/holy orders. There are some you can take over and over - confession, Holy Eucharist and the anointing of the sick. Those days we used to call it the extreme unction. When they saw the priests they died because they were so frightened. People believed it is only when you are going to die but it's actually a healing.

I was looking at this YouTube clip of a Bishop of New York who has been

elevated to the state of Blessed - Fulton Sheen. He was a brilliant writer plus an equally brilliant speaker. I was listening to one of his sermons on sacraments and he was explaining how he was taken to a place in New York where a wife was poisoned by the husband and she was dying. She was hallucinating and while she was going through this process where the poison was going to her system, she was imagining that parts of her were coming off. Then she started donating parts to people - that was the state she was in. In that state he gave her the anointing of the sick, and within minutes she was healed by God supernaturally.

One of the recurring sacraments that can help us to host the presence of God is:

The sacrament of reconciliation

You go to confession, give the truth of your heart and you make yourself right with God. Making yourself right with God is not enough because originally your problem was not with God, but your problem was with the people you live with. That's why some people go to church, worship God and go for confession but they hate someone who is close to them. They haven't worked that part out. Originally God is offended because we have hurt someone else.

That issue of our brokenness, sinfulness and inability to forgive can be taken to confession - as you give the truth and you're washed in the blood, as you make that a habit and you grow, you create something called a space within. There are some people who have this internal space. It is easy to talk to them, relate to them and you sense they have that space. But there are others who are clever, educated, and skilled but they are full of themselves and have no space at all.

Other religions have recognized this as well. In Hinduism, Taoism, you get people who have discovered inner space. When you have inner space, you become an attraction for other people. They sense that you have an answer they don't have. When you have this inner space, when you have given the truth and you're washed in the blood, you fill that inner space with the next sacrament:

The Eucharist

This is where you bring Jesus to live inside of you. It is a tremendous gift and that's why it is given to us on a daily basis. We are filled on a daily basis. First you have the sacrament of reconciliation where you reconcile with God in your personal prayer; but you also do it through the sacrament. You're washed in His blood, you have weakness, you struggle but that's alright - you give it to the Lord. Then you keep receiving Jesus into your heart through the Holy Eucharist.

When you do these two things, many of us have a problem of the cloud. The problem of the cloud is, even though we partake of the sacraments, we are unable to see God because the issues of life cover us. It only takes one little hurt to make us lose our entire spirituality that day. We become unbalanced because the problem is one hurt, one rejection, one unexpected temptation and suddenly you realize the spiritual life you're building collapses and we become helpless.

When that takes place, we use the third tool:

The gift of praise

You must learn to use the gift of praise - don't allow people to laugh at it and silence you. If you do that you have lost your access code to break the cloud. How do you break through this thing that covers you? By praise. As you praise God, suddenly the space opens up and you make a connection with the living God - and you know He's alive, you know He is involved, you know He is real in your life.

Instead of dealing with the issue by yourself - if you feel the cloud has come over you and you've lost Him, praise God. That's why St. Paul teaches, "Praise God always and everywhere." That has even been picked up in the canon of the mass. It is right, it is good, it is salvific to praise God always and everywhere. Even though we say it a lot of people don't know how to do it.

You get up in the morning, my own experience is, sometimes you spend 20 minutes trying to gather your thoughts and you call that praying. We aren't praying but we are running after our thoughts - they have gone to England, to America, to our childhood and we are running after it as well. If something hurtful has happened then we get stuck in that place. You break through with praise. Praising God is the way through it.

If you **read a psalm a day, you'll soon find enough psalms to praise with.** But if you can't find a psalm - skip the cursing and find the praise and use it. If you can't find it, then go back to the foundational psalm which is psalm 95. That's the psalm of praise.

As you praise God and learn to have a culture of praise, soon you will see that you start penetrating the cloud and connecting with God. This is the journey! After that, things begin to happen effortlessly. It is this that is the difficult part - taking off. Taking off is done with the sacrament of reconciliation, the Holy Eucharist and praise.

Look at Jesus: When the disciples asked him to teach them to pray, he said, "Our Father in heaven." He penetrated the cloud. "Holy be Your name." I see you and I acknowledge that you are there. You haven't gone away and you are in control, I look at you. Immediately everything falls into place.

What happens if you lose him? **A little thing becomes big.**

- Your enemy becomes paramount because you think your enemy is out to get you and you have no help. Some people get so consumed with their enemy, they even kill them at the cost of their entire life. Their whole future is gone. But at that moment, killing the enemy seems to be the only solution.
- Sometimes we use hurtful words, we know we are destroying our relationships but we can't help it because we have lost God. Because we lost God, this problem becomes paramount inside us; and we need to fix it. We say, "Until I tell that person what's inside my heart, I can't sleep, I can't eat. I'm waiting to unload it." But what happened? All our relationships have been smashed.
- The same thing happens with addictions. Because we lose God and don't have His presence, we think we have to satisfy ourselves. People become lustful, addicted to pornography, alcohol - because they think, "If I don't do it for myself, there is no one to meet my innermost needs." We can't trust that God who is a living God, can actually meet those needs.

Psalm 113:1

Praise the Lord. Praise, O servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord.

We have a job and that is to praise God. Our job is not to praise ourselves, not to glorify what we have done, not to show how much of a champion you are. Our job is to praise God.

Psalm 113:3

From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the Lord is to be praised.

My interpretation is: From the time you get up, until you sleep - praise God.

When you praise God, you are piercing the cloud that forms from within our nature. As you do these three things and you spend time in prayer, a beautiful thing happens: We begin to know the person whom we are having a relationship with. Isn't that what happens in a relationship? You have a relationship with someone because you begin to know that person. That person knows you and you know that person.

When we were children there was a saying people would say, "Nice from far and far from nice." As long as they are far away they seem nice. Once they come close you begin to realize the flaws and the difficulties. That's what happens in a relationship.

In a relationship with God, something wonderful takes place: We begin to know Him. Until you know God, you only have an idea of God and many of us don't have such a good idea of God. We have this barter system idea of God and God the Father is somehow a very old man with a beard and that He gets angry so better not approach Him directly because if He gets angry He wants to kick someone, smash someone or burn someone.

Then what do you do? Go to the Blessed Mother because she is loving and careful and she will hear your problem. Go to Jesus because Jesus is your friend. Don't go to God the Father! ☺

Where do you learn this from? Our childhood understanding. But when you have an intimate relationship with God and the cloud is pierced - suddenly you begin to have downloads from the Holy Spirit on the true nature of God. That's the time you and I are finished. When those downloads start, internally we are broken and captured by God. That's when you find people who really give their lives to God. They have started receiving a download of who God is.

Until then we are praying to the God of our own understanding, our own childhood concepts. Here, the cloud is broken through confession, the Holy Eucharist and praise - and suddenly the download from the Holy Spirit begins to move inside you and you begin to know who God is.

I want to show you one facet of God which many people don't realize:

Psalm 113:7

He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap...

You begin to realize that God's eyes and heart are on the poor, the needy, the sinful and the lost. It takes time to understand that. Why does it take time to understand this? As I pray the Lord is teaching me.

Think about a person who is going to work and coming back on a motorcycle. When this person sees people standing for the bus and walking down the street, does He say, "Thank you Jesus, you have given me a motorcycle. These people have nothing and they are walking to work and going by bus and they're hot. Jesus please help them also." Do we think like that? No, we are looking at the people who are going in air conditioned cars and we are thinking, "Here I am going on my poor motorcycle. They are nicely going in an air conditioned car. God, why can't you give me a car?"

Then what happens to the person who has a car? Do you think they are satisfied and say, "O Lord, I thank you I don't have to get wet in the rain like a motorcyclist or wait in long queues for buses. Lord you have blessed me with a car." No, I'm looking at the car that is newer and more expensive than mine. I'm looking at that car and thinking, "I wish I had that car. Why on earth can't I have it?"

Therefore, human beings are never satisfied. We are always longing for something higher and greater. The result is we are preoccupied with the rich, powerful and the beautiful. We are preoccupied with the gifts we can get from life. We have no time to think of the lost, the broken, the poor, the sinner, the one who is enslaved. We say, "Let them be. I have problems of my own."

That's why, even in rich countries, people continue to be discontented. We are all caught in the trap. That's why we are complaining, "How unfortunate we are, I wish I married someone else, I wish we were living in some other country." We are caught in this discontent.

But God is totally self-contained. God has no needs, He has no need for power, He has no need to be satisfied, He has no need for somebody to acknowledge Him. He is totally within Himself and complete.

Because He is internally free and fulfilled, His heart goes towards those who are lost and broken and shattered and sinful.

We are unable to do that because our own needs have not been met.

When you host the presence of God, the first thing that happens is

- that God starts meeting your needs.
- You receive internal security from the hands of God - you know He is looking after you.
- You have that sense of peace and freedom - you know He loves you. You have that sense of the favour of God on your life and you become free for the first time of your own self. That is the biggest trap we have. We are caught up with our own selves and we are in love with our own selves.

When you're free of yourself, God gives you His heart - care, concern, commitment to the needs of other people. You may get into a big mess doing it, you may get caught up where you have to sacrifice or lose something or go through pain - but within it is found absolute internal peace, rest, freedom and joy because God is leading you through it.

When you host the presence of God, you yourself are blessed.

- You're blessed because your innermost needs are met,
- your internal life is freed,
- you have joy, love and peace in your heart.
- When you have that in your heart, He says, "Take me into the world in which you live." Isn't it much more beautiful than living for ourselves?

People say, "Lord, when I retire and I've got my pension, then I will come and serve you. Until then I have to look after myself." The Lord says, "Best of luck to you. Spend your whole life looking after yourself." You will be miserably looking after yourself. Here is the beauty of the internal journey.

I will explain this in more detail next week: St. Joseph Vaz, the great Saint of Sri Lanka is being celebrated this year. All what I said can be explained in his life. A divine encounter, where he touches God through the sacraments. Not only does he touch God through the sacraments but he actually experiences God. It is said that when he was saying the mass, people saw that he was raised up above the ground. He was experiencing transcendence - a touch of the divine that normal people would not touch.

But he was also given a heart for the people who had no pastor in Sri Lanka. God said, "Go to them." God gave him His heart, and he had obstacles upon obstacles.

You would at least expect a little cooperation from God. Joseph Vaz could have said, "Lord, I am going to serve you, take me to Ceylon. Boats take 3 days, send a favourable bin and send me in 1 day because after all, I'm going to do your work." But what happened? A storm blew them off course and it was over 10 days. The people in the boat said, "Someone is a curse here," and they pointed to Joseph Vaz. Joseph

Vaz is rejected by those people and they curse him for being on the boat. Yet here he is going on the mission of God. Then he comes here and you expect God to look after his health but he falls ill. When he falls ill, he is left to die. A woman who was walking past the jungle hears the sound of him being there and feeds him and takes him out of the jungle.

Joseph Vaz was experiencing the foundation of human security being broken down. When that is broken down we think it is the end of the world, but God was teaching him, "I am still able to look after you."

What happens to a person like that?

- They are no longer afraid of authority,
- they are not afraid of death,
- they are not afraid of suffering or rejection.

No wonder God could use him when the whole world was against him! For us, someone says one little word, it is like someone has pricked our eye. We start crying and saying, "How misunderstood our life is, how difficult it is." We can't take a little suffering, a little rejection - because we haven't grown into that place.

What happened to Joseph Vaz is exactly what happened to Jesus Christ. You remove the props and the foundations and it looks as if it is the end of your life - but God is still holding you.

It's an amazing thing, and He wants to tell you,

- I can hold you when you have nothing.
- I can still carry you when there is no way for you to be carried - because I am taking you through life.
- You don't have to be afraid of anybody,
- dependent on anybody,
- hold on to anything –
- **Because I am more than enough for you.**