

Wednesday meeting – 25th January 2016

Hosting the Presence of God - 4

I am getting major feedback from everywhere how people are experiencing this amazing truth. In a little while, when I have finished one part of the preaching, I am going to read to you a testimony sent by someone about the inner journey concerning hosting the presence of God. We can get lost in a miracle or in something God does - like giving us an answer to a prayer - and lose the realization that all this happens because of an inner journey and a life of prayer with God.

I want to summarize what we have been doing so far:

God is looking for a partner.

He can do it on His own because He is Almighty God. But He is looking for a partner. Why? He wants someone to carry His presence into the world. The negative of this is, if there is no one to carry God's presence into the world, that world exists as if God does not exist. It is a cold, rational, cause and effect world - and it tends to confirm what people are believing. They are believing that there is no God, they are believing that cause and effect, logic and reason is the only thing that exists.

It is actually true in places where there is no one to carry God to that place. Look at the example of the lady who shared a testimony today: She was having two hernias and God had a desire to heal her. If she didn't come to a place and meet people who were carrying God in their hearts and she didn't encounter these people, most probably, she would have gone through the natural process of going through all the tests, the operation and then recovering hopefully from the hernia.

Why? Because there is no one to bring in a divine intervention, there is no one to bring in God to that situation. Therefore, natural law prevails. In the world today, natural law prevails. Unfortunately, we who are working with religion, even Christianity for many of us, is only a philosophy. It's a way of life, a way of thinking and understanding - but we actually believe in the natural laws. We believe that those cannot be violated, we believe that if the natural law is there then nothing can move beyond it, and we have lost the world of wonder, miracles, signs and power from God.

Last month we had this amazing miracle of the girl whose leg was straightened and she came and testified here. I asked her if she could walk and she said, "I can also dance," and she danced and showed me. Here she couldn't walk before, because the pin was inside her leg. God transcended natural law. If it can happen once, why not ten times? If once, why not a hundred? We are limiting Him by our limited understanding which we are holding on to.

Tonight, God is wanting people to carry Him into the world. Otherwise the world will remain the same. When He can't find anybody, very rarely, He comes by Himself. Today is the

Feast of the conversion of St. Paul. God knew Peter, James, John, Bartholomew and then Jesus probably realized these 12 weren't going to work out and that he needed someone else. So he came to meet the guy who was the biggest opponent. But God needed him. Then St. Paul became the vehicle through which God was carried into the world. Paul was completely blinded and caught up in his own understanding and thinking, and God said, "I'm using you to be a vehicle." When Ananias told Jesus, "Lord, you don't know who he is, he is the guy who has come to kill us," Jesus says, "I have chosen him to carry My name to the kings and rulers of this earth."

Someone showed me a beautiful verse when I was on the way to Kandy. This person said that what I am preaching is in this verse and when I read the verse I realized that it's truly there, and I thought we'll start with that tonight:

Isaiah 57:14

And it will be said: "Build up, prepare the road! Remove the obstacles out of the way of my people."

The Lord is saying, "I want some people to do some work and clear the roads so that the obstacles will be removed from the roads for my people."

Isaiah 57:15

For this is what the high and lofty One says -- He who lives forever, whose name is holy...

He introduces Himself as the high and lofty One who lives forever and whose name is Holy.

Isaiah 57:15 continued

"I live in a high and holy place..."

We can also call it the tabernacle of the church.

Isaiah 57:15 continued

...but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit...

God is living in two places at the same time and only He can do that. The first place is:

- High and lofty heaven

The second place is:

- In people who are contrite and lowly in spirit

The high and mighty God who is living in heaven is also prepared to live in certain people. Let's look at the three conditions for carrying Jesus in our hearts into the world:

1. Sacrament of reconciliation

It is not only the sacrament of reconciliation but also a heart of repentance. I remember when I was

prayed over for the baptism of the Holy Spirit in 1976, my inner eyes were opened and I began to hear, be touched and know the Lord. I was loved, I became alive and I began to hear the voice of God and experience Him. When I looked at a tree, through the tree God would speak to me. When I looked at something, through it the Lord revealed His presence to me. It was wonderful!

But something else happened: I began to look at other people. While I saw God in the tree, while I saw God in an event - when I looked at people, I didn't see God. Instead I began to see their faults and I began to think ill of them. The priest of our parish, the people around me - I had a critical heart, and I thought I was a little bit holier than them. If you asked me at that time I would've never admitted it and said, "Don't be silly! I don't have such a feeling." If you defend yourself vigorously, let me tell you you're guilty.

It took me a long time to sort this out and I was losing my peace, my freedom. Darkness was entering into my system even though I was praying. The reason I saw was, because I didn't have a contrite heart. The heart I had was a judgmental heart. In simple terms: If you have become a critic - we have enough critics today, telling us what to do and what not to do. If you go to the bottom of it, they have been hurt a little bit somewhere in some place, and that hurt has coloured their eyes.

It happens to me as well. When I am hurt by someone and when I look at that person I can give you an analysis of the terrible personality that person has because I've been hurt inside. When I'm reconciled and I'm okay with them, I look at them and I understand what's happening in his life and I have no problem with him, because the real problem wasn't the analysis but the hurt inside. We aren't mature enough to understand that. So we get stuck with it.

A lot of us want to grow on our spiritual journey. Those days I used to read St. John on the cross, the interior castle of St. Theresa of Avila - not because I wanted to learn but because I wanted to see if I was in a better place. Even in the spiritual world we are competing. I want to be superior, more knowledgeable and greater than somebody else. It is only later I found out that advancement is reverse in the spiritual world. You have no time to analyze other people because you are struggling with your own broken nature. You have no time to judge other people because in my own heart I'm judging myself and I can see the limitations of my broken, sinful nature.

In the spiritual world, it's a reverse. You have entered into this place where you're seeing your brokenness and God is saying, "Now I can actually travel with you because you have space within your heart for me." Otherwise we say, "You know, I've been really good these days, Lord. I've learnt a lot of things. Give me a preaching assignment because I'd like to tell people what I've learnt. Can I gather them?" But people are running away from us. Then we say, "They are too shallow, they don't want to listen to the beautiful insights I'm having."

God works in reverse. You're broken, you know your sinfulness, you're aware of it, and because of it, you come to the feet of the Lord.

The beautiful thing is, like we are attracted to the rich and the powerful and the beautiful - if you see someone in rich clothes, you stop and watch, torn clothes make us ask how much they will ask us for. We are naturally attracted to the rich, the powerful and the beautiful because we are thinking about our own selves.

God is completely different because He is complete, fulfilled in Himself, omnipotent and Almighty - He doesn't need anything. Because He doesn't need anything, He is actually attracted to the weak, the broken, the sinful and the lost. It takes a long time to sort that out because we have no example of that in the world. Powerful people are attracted to powerful people, politicians are attracted to politicians, rich people to rich people. I met a rich person once and I thought he must be a happy guy, but he couldn't deal with it because there were 5 more who were richer than him.

God is attracted to the contrite, the broken and those who are struggling with their heart. Because we don't have an example, a lot of people don't know. That's why we have to carry that God into the world. Here it is: A contrite heart and a lowly spirit.

2. The sacrament of the Eucharist

The living presence of God coming to live inside us. We don't have to live alone, we don't have to walk alone. When you make a space through a contrite heart, He will come to live inside of us. But, just because He comes, He doesn't become real in any of us. We go to confession, we receive communion but our world is the world of this dimension. We are caught up in this world and the little things. Therefore we have the third gift that we who are exercising in the charismatic renewal have:

3. The gift of praise and worship

When you praise and worship God, you use the sacrament of reconciliation with a contrite heart, you use the sacrament of the Eucharist and receive Him into your life. Then you allow it to become an experience in the power of the Holy Spirit by praising and worshipping God.

When you use the three keys, God is dwelling inside of you. He will open the gate and move out from time to time. When He moves out - you do a little thing, God does a mighty thing. You say a little prayer, God does a miracle. You work in some place, God changes the whole situation. You think about something and He makes it so that it actually happens. Suddenly you begin to realize that there is somebody that is supporting you from behind. This is the beauty of this internal journey.

Tonight I'm asking you: let's start that journey. Let's not allow anything else to distract us.

We have CRL all over the world and this is from someone who lives in England. Her background is she had twins and when she got the twins, one twin was born with half a heart and doctors here said the child would never survive. She took the children and went to England and they went through endless operations and endless struggles in hospitals. The good news is, 7 years later they have been able to recreate the heart and the child is very much alive as a gift from God. But they also went through the inner journey of dealing with a sick child and dealing with crisis time after time. When you carry the presence, you don't simply carry the presence for healthy, miraculous things alone. You can carry Him through the deepest crisis of life as well.

I just want to read to you what she has said:

I've been following the new theme of Hosting the Presence with avid interest. The more I dwell on what you say, I realize just how much God relies on people carrying His presence in the world to rich people in crisis, like me. My mind always goes back to the 31st night of December 2006, praying quietly before the dawn of the new year. My life was about to enter a chapter full of promise - the birth of my twins. It so happened that the year of 2007 was a year I was to become a pilgrim, walking a path through a minefield.

I always wondered what God must have been thinking at that moment. I spoke to Him. Did His heart break for me at how oblivious I was to what was to come? Did He wish with all His heart that not break, but endure all that I had to overcome on my path? I always wondered how God feels when He knows that His children are about to take that step, where they have to walk through hell and not know if they would come out seeing Him or totally blind to Him.

She says she was about to enter the crisis and she didn't know at that time, but God knew. She is asking the question in retrospect: What do you think God would have been feeling at that time? When He was looking down, knowing that she was to go through this tough year - not knowing whether she would pull through and find Him or fall into blindness, where you lose God. How many people are bitter when things happen in their lives and they say they don't want God.

In this background, the teaching of people carrying the presence of God, has made me see God's ways in a fascinating new light. You say God needs a host to carry Him through this world and He needs a voice to carry His words. I see clearly this. Yes, He may have let me walk on through that minefield - but never alone. He had those who carried Him alongside me, fencing me from the perils of this journey.

She suddenly discovered that though she thought she was walking alone, God was supporting her through the people who came into her life. They were carrying the presence of God. At that time you're not aware of it and she thought, "That's not God, that's a helper." She never realized that it is God Himself being carried in the heart of a person coming into our lives.

I can tell you that the lovely people God had surrounded me with, made up mostly of the people of the CRL community, have been my touchstone to leading me increasingly towards His presence. They have been the spring in my desert, nurturing me with His word with amazing instinct, of knowing exactly what I needed to hear.

I have known moments where I would be crippled with terror and insecurity, and the next moment to be freed by simply having a casual chat or a cup of tea with them. The presence they carry is so strong, they don't need to utter a single word or prayer.

Who can carry His presence? Those who have a contrite heart, those whose spirit is given up to God. If you have a judgmental heart, the first person you lose is God. Jesus said, "Judge not and you shall not be judged." Sometimes the kind of critical standard that we use to judge other people, if used on us, we are finished. But we use it anyway! Finally one day, in the presence of God, we will be judged for that. But we need to have a contrite heart and a heart of mercy that Jesus Himself carries for me.

Tonight I want to deal with a character carrying the presence of God. Today we will look at the Old Testament and next week the New Testament. The character is Moses himself. You already know the background of Moses: The name Moses means 'Taken from the water'. His mother couldn't protect him or keep him, or give him away so she put him into a reed boat and put him into the Nile. Divine providence was at work and right at that moment the pharaoh's daughter was bathing and she picked him up and raised him as the prince of Egypt.

Of course he had an anger problem. He used to get angry fast. One day he got angry with someone and he got into an argument and he killed him. So he was a murderer and because he was a murderer he fled from Egypt and went into Midian. In Midian he married the daughter of a priest there. Moses' father-in-law was a priest, but not a Hebrew priest - a priest of the god of the Midians. So Moses had even gone to another kind of religion.

When he went there, he was looking after his father-in-law's flock and God came to meet him; just like God came in the desert to meet St. Paul in today's readings. Here is the divine encounter given beautifully:

Exodus 3:7

The Lord said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt..."

The good news is that God can see. That is a tremendous truth. We are always asking Him, "God, can't you see?" And He says, "Yes, I can see." He has seen the misery of His people in Egypt.

Exodus 3:7 continued

"...I have heard them crying out..."

The second good news is that He can hear. So God can see you and hear you.

Exodus 3:7 continued

"...because of their slave drivers, and I'm concerned about their suffering."

So the third thing is that He is concerned. So if He can see, hear and has concern - why doesn't God do something?

Exodus 3:8

"So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them out of that land into a good and spacious land..."

He says, "Because they have cried out, I have heard their cry, I have seen their misery, I know their suffering. Therefore, I have come to rescue them."

I always have this question that comes into my mind: Why is God wasting time with Moses? Why can't He go directly to Egypt, talk to the pharaoh, tell the pharaoh, "I'm giving you

an ultimatum - set them free or I'm going to do something to you." I'm sure the pharaoh would have listened to Him much better than anybody else. I'm sure Moses would have asked the same question. He says, "I have come to save them."

The key is: God wanted to do something but He wanted a host to carry Him. This is a biblical truth and you can't get away from it. He is always working in a divine-human partnership. If there's no one willing, God's plan is also delayed. God has to work through the broken, crooked lines of human history.

Exodus 3:11

But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to the pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

Today the world is attracted to powerful people. They can do anything. Today we are seeing world leaders coming on the stage and saying, "Have confidence in me, I can give it to you. I am able to do this." They are so confident about themselves that they can take on anybody. I saw a beautiful interview between the press and a world leader. The world leader said to the press, "You shut up!" In other words, their confidence is in themselves.

Moses had a big problem - he had lost his self-confidence. How do you know? He said to God, "Who am I that I should go to the pharaoh? Who am I to go and tell them? I'm nobody now. I've lost my princely position, I've lost my wealth, I've lost my place in society and I'm nobody. Why do you want to pick on me?"

A lot of us think that God is looking for some talent that you and I have. We say, "I have a talent to sing. Maybe I can sing for the Lord. I have a talent to preach and I know the whole oxford dictionary. Maybe I can preach for the Lord." That's working from your natural levels. Moses had a major identity crisis. His self-esteem had fallen to zero. Without God it's a bad thing because you end up in an asylum or you have to take drugs. *But if you have God it's a great thing.*

Why? Because you don't have confidence in yourself, you can quickly learn to have confidence in God. Sometimes people take years. We interfere with God's plan by taking it over whenever we want.

My grandson had received a toy he didn't know how to operate so he came and asked me to help him operate it. Halfway through operating it he said, "Now I know, give it to me!" If I told him he didn't know yet he didn't listen to me. He was convinced he knows and after some time he comes and says, "It is still not working!" Then he comes and brings it back.

Isn't that what we are doing? We are taking it from the hands of God and then we are saying, "No, don't tell me! I know how to do this." We are wasting our life.

Because Moses had no confidence in himself, he was in a good position. That's why

I think God came to him. If you look at the Magnificat of the Blessed Virgin Mary closely, she says, "He lifts up the lowly and brings down the powerful."

Exodus 3:10

So now, go. I am sending you to pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.

Moses could have asked a very important question, "Why are you wasting time talking to me? Why don't you go yourself and get it done?" God says, "I have come to save the people - but you go." Last week we discussed Joseph Vaz. God wanted to come to Ceylon of that time because He saw people who didn't have the religion they were introduced to, they didn't have someone to help them with the heart of God.

So God came to Joseph Vaz and gave him a restless heart. He told him, "You have to go to these people." It is the same thing with Moses. God said, "I have seen their cry, you go!"

Exodus 3:12

And God said, "I will be with you."

What's the answer God gave? "You don't have to worry about it - I'm going with you to Egypt." We can always ask the question of why He didn't go by Himself. This is God's nature - He works in a partnership. Moses said, "I don't have confidence in myself, I don't have any strength, I don't have any capacity - so how am I go and do this?" God said, "Don't worry. When you are going I'm going with you."

But He isn't going side by side - He is going within Moses. Moses is hosting the presence of God into Egypt. God didn't interview Moses' capacity and character or whether he could fit the bill. Normally if you want a CEO, you have an interview and you check how they do analysis, if they're strong in marketing, if they have qualifications - and then you appoint the CEO.

All God wanted was a host who would not interfere in His plan. When He found the host, He said, "I will be with you." Look at the sign that followed:

Exodus 3:12 continued

...And this will be the sign to you, that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.

Those who are hosting God are actually worshippers. They worship God and that's why they aren't hosting themselves. The sign this will happen is that they will come to the mountain and worship. People who are used by God are worshippers, not boasters, not self-gloried, not people who rely on their gifts and talents because they're projecting themselves. They are worshippers with a contrite heart who have opened themselves to the power of God.

The story is long here - Moses tried to convince God the best he could that God should find someone

else. In our world we are trying to convince people we are the ones who should be chosen. We say, "I'm the guy you should take because I'm the most talented. Let me run down A, B and C so that you can see how good I am." Moses said, "Why can't you find someone else?" He was such a broken man inside. God can use broken people and that's the great good news.

Exodus 4:1

Moses answered, "What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, 'The Lord did not appear to you'?"

Moses says, "You're sending me but I have no title, no power, no authority. What if these people say that to me?" Then God answers:

Exodus 4:2

Then the Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?" "A staff," he replied.

A staff is a piece of stick and that's all he had.

Exodus 4:3

The Lord said, "Throw it on the ground."

To throw something on the ground what must you do with your hand? You have to let it go. Moses let go of the staff and it was no longer his.

Exodus 4:3 continued

...Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it.

The stick became a living being. When he held it in his hand, it was a staff and when he let it go, it became a living thing.

Why? It was then that God's divine power started working. This stick brought the ten plagues of Egypt. He would have picked it off some tree on Mount Sinai. It is this stick that parted the Red Sea. It is this stick that hit the rock in the desert and water came.

It's not the stick, but it's actually carrying what you have as belonging to God. Then supernatural things start happening. Until you think you're doing it,

- however talented you are, you can't make a stick a snake;
- however gifted you are, you can't heal anybody;
- however clever you are, you can't convert somebody - but He can. With a little stick, He could bring the plagues of Egypt, He could part the Red Sea and He could bring water in the desert.

The little life that I have, if it is mine, it is little. If it is His, it is infinite. **Next week I'll explain:** When the mother of Moses held him in her hands, if she wanted Moses to survive, she had to let him go. When

she let go of the control, though it apparently looked as if things were out of control, God was moving in that place. The Lord led that little reed basket into the hands of the pharaoh's daughter.

When the proposal was made to the Blessed Mother to be the mother of the Lord and she said, "I'm not married, how is this going to happen?" The angel said, "Nothing is impossible for God," and then she says, "Let it be done to me according to your word." She let go.

Let me summarize: Great people with great gifts remain only at the natural level until they hold on to the control of their own lives. Little people with little gifts and no capacity can be used greatly by God when they realize that they can let go into the hands of God; because God can take a stick and liberate Egypt.