

Wednesday Meeting - 1st February 2016

We had the servers retreat last weekend, and during the servers retreat, the

Lord spoke to us about the cloud over our lives. I would just like to remind you - even in secular terminology, we talk of people being under a cloud. We were reflecting on something called the cloud and I've been talking about the cloud during the last few months.

The cloud is a kind of oppressive environment that comes over our lives.

- We can't see beyond it,
- we can't feel beyond it and
- We think that the whole world is coming to an end.

Everything becomes oppressive, sad, and unable to deal with and things become really difficult inside.

So this is not only a cloud in the secular terms - but even in the spiritual language we have

this concept called the cloud. There is a great book written in the middle centuries on spirituality called 'The Cloud of Unknowing.' That means you can't pierce it and see God.

The one way to pierce that cloud is praise and worship of God.

Not only saying your prayers but praise and worship. **I have invited people to take the half an hour challenge for 7 days.** When you get up in the morning, praise God continuously for half an hour. In between, when your heart is full - worship God for the rest of the 15-20 minutes. This helps you push away the negative cloud. It will take away a lot of the weight that is upon your life.

There is also another cloud that is spoken of in the scriptures and by many who

experience god. That cloud is called the cloud of presence glory of God. This is where the environment is filled with the presence of God. We just don't want to get rid of this cloud of oppression - because that's only 50% - but once you get rid of the cloud of oppression, we have another great gift waiting for us. That gift is the cloud of God's presence. We need to touch that if you really want peace, happiness, fulfillment, security and inner joy. It's all available in the cloud of presence.

I explained this so I can share with you an amazing testimony that took place

yesterday in Mabole. Many people come to Mabole and with the praise and worship, the cloud of presence is tangible. Even today in the worship we could sense that there is a cloud of the presence of God - it was not tired people praising God. There is this energy and I think all of you felt that energy of the presence.

So yesterday in Mabole, the energy of His presence was moving so beautifully.

I preached what I'm going to preach about today. Moses was asked what he had in his hands and then he

was asked to let it go. I explained it and we were worshipping on this theme before the Blessed Sacrament. When we finished, the testimonies started coming in.

There is this one amazing testimony: A person who had been legally blind for close to 30 years - which means you can see but you can't read letters or see figures, you can only see the differences of light but you can't do things normally. This person had been struggling with this blindness for many years, and had cried to the Lord, gone to doctors and nothing happened. She was weeping and she explained how she surrendered this problem of her life to the Lord and said, "This is what I have in my hands. What I have is my blindness and I give it to you." She says, after a moment, she looked and she was able to start reading the screen for the first time. Then it started becoming clearer and clearer.

The beautiful thing is that the children came with her and the children were weeping because they have seen this thing for years.

You could see that the cloud of presence brings down the power of God.

The cloud of unbelief blocks the move of God in our lives and we become trapped in a rationalist world.

I want to invite you to take up the half an hour challenge - clean up things by praise and worship of God. Use a psalm and if you can't find a psalm use psalm 95. Praise God and when you're full of looking at Him, worship Him because you're clearing the clouds over your life.

Don't stop there - as you worship the Lord you will see that the

- cloud of unknowing,
- negativity,
- darkness,
- depression,

a rationalist worldview which is shut down by what is possible for human beings will shift and you will start breaking in to the supernatural. **It's as simple as learning to praise God.** I'm inviting you to join us on this challenge - half an hour in the morning, half an hour in the night. Clear your mind, clear your heart, praise God, change the cloud, read the scripture and like the testimony I gave of that person - God will start speaking to you and you will see Jesus in the events of your life.

You will see that the theme the Lord is giving us in these days is to carry the presence of God into the world. You carry Him inside you and you take Him into the world. So to carry the presence of God inside you, we need to learn how to do it from the Lord. Some people say, "I want to go and talk about Jesus to my family but they all get up and go. I want to talk about what the Lord has done and they say, 'There she goes.'"

That's because we're dealing in words. That's why St. Francis said, "*Go out and preach the gospel, but use words only if you have to.*" In other words, you preach the gospel with having Jesus inside you - people will see Him.

When we are talking about Jesus and throwing a tantrum, or when we talk about Jesus and carry petty grudges, when we talk about Jesus and project our ego - people are no longer believing what we say. You carry Jesus by making room in your heart.

How do you do that? I told you about three keys you can use to have Jesus living inside you:

Sacrament of reconciliation

Today I expand this term and call it 'a heart of repentance'. One of the biggest problems we have in our lifetime is we are spending so much of energy and effort analyzing and criticizing other people. We can't do anything about them but our whole energy and effort is directed towards analyzing, criticizing and trying to correct other people.

What we miss when we do that is, we miss the opportunity to allow God to fix what's wrong in our lives. We are so used to looking at the problems other people have but we are never used to self-examination and understanding what is going wrong in our own lives. Because of that, the Lord cannot dwell within us because there is no space since we are full of ourselves, our own understanding, our own opinions and the Lord is unable to really work within us.

The first key is a heart of repentance where you're constantly bringing it before God and allowing His blood to cleanse us.

Once you have a heart of repentance, you shouldn't stay there because that also becomes a temptation. "I beat myself and I'm so happy because I'm the most humble servant in the whole world, I'm the most repentant person in the whole world." Without knowing, pride has come into that as well. That's why it is just one key.

The second key is to fill that place with Jesus How do you do that?.

The Holy Eucharist

In the mass there are two parts - one is the body and blood of Jesus and the other is the liturgy of the word. So Jesus not only comes to us as body and blood alone but He comes through His word as well. So how do you look at Jesus? Through His words. Looking at a picture is fine, but many of the pictures we know about Jesus actually originate in Italy and other European countries - men who were good looking were taken as the model.

Go beyond and look at Him and fill yourselves with Him by filling yourself with His words. When you're filling yourself with the word, you are getting Jesus' opinions. Some people say, "I am the most useless

guy in the world." That is your opinion. But now, it's not relevant what my opinion is - what does Jesus think of me? I allow that opinion to fill my heart. That is to bring Jesus into your life.

You hold Jesus in your heart and have Him inside you by carrying His attitudes, His thoughts, His opinion in your own reflection. It's no longer about, "I think it is like this, I believe it is like that, my opinion is this." You may be having a good opinion but it is nothing compared to the word of Jesus Himself. That is to be filled with Jesus.

The Holy Eucharist brings His body and blood and His living presence and His word brings His internal revelation into our hearts. So we are constantly being changed by Him coming to live inside us. For example, He says, "Come to me all you who are burdened and heavy laden." So if you're burdened and heavy laden, don't try to follow your own understanding and opinion. We say, "I need to punish myself for 10 days and come because then I'll be suitable for God." There are people who have worked out their own answers and say, "I am going to punish myself until I become suitable." That is your own understanding.

But the real understanding is coming from *Matthew 11:28* - "*Come to me all you who are burdened and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*"

What is your solution? "Take my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart."

You begin to see that the word of Jesus has a guidance - you take Him and His word into your heart.

The third key is:

Praise and worship God

You praise and worship for the cloud to disappear. When you use these three keys, you're carrying the Lord within you and carrying Him into the world.

When people interact with us, we aren't trying to show Jesus. If you try to show Him you'll lose it. You forget trying to show Jesus and you simply carry Him in. Then other people begin to see the touch of God in your life. Joseph Vaz is the greatest example. He carried Jesus into situations. He didn't say, "Look I am carrying Jesus, look at me." By the way he served the sick, met the needs of people, risked his life to offer the experience of God to people, people saw Jesus inside of him.

Last week I spoke from the Old Testament about Moses. God has this way and you can see it in the scriptures. God's way is often a person - God wants to work in companionship with people. He can work by Himself, He can do anything He wants - but He has chosen to work in partnership. So we saw what happened: He came to meet Moses. When He came to meet Moses, He said, "I have seen their misery, I have heard their cry."

The truth is that God can hear what you're saying and He can see what is happening to you. I have a brain that thinks cross-wise, so I asked myself, "Moses could have asked God a question: 'If you can see what's happening and hear their cry, what are you doing here? You should be there and doing something with them. Instead you have done a detour and come here.'"

The answer is very simple: For God to go to Egypt, He needs a vehicle. That is God's choice. The vehicle is Moses. He says, "You go." You can't blame Moses because this is the first time he has met God and God is telling him, "You go and tell the pharaoh to let my people go and bring them out of there, come through the Red Sea and you will worship me here on this mountain." Moses would have been wondering who on earth this was and what He could possibly want.

Then Moses asks, "How do I know they'll listen to me?" Then God gives him the simple answer: "I will be with you."

God came to be with Moses not because Moses was His special, loving pet. Most people think that God's favour is on them and they are God's pet. God has no favourites, but He wants the mission done. He wants someone to take Him and He tells Moses, "Let's go and do this." When Moses asks how it will be done, the Lord says, "I will be with you."

That's the key we looked at last week: When the Lord is with us, the impossible becomes possible. If the Lord is not with us, even the possible becomes impossible. If you ask people suffering from depression they say, "We are unable to get out of bed." The normal possible has become impossible for them.

If the Lord is with you, all that you need will be answered. He told Gideon the same thing. Gideon asked, "Who are you to tell me to defeat these people?" The angel said, "The Lord is with you." The same thing was said to David and also to the Blessed Mother. We say it in the Hail Mary every day - 'Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.' Because God is there, the impossible is possible.

Let's look at God equipping Moses. I am teaching you this because this is the same way He will equip you and me.

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'?"

Isn't that a fair question? He didn't know who this Lord was, he didn't know what kind of reaction he would get.

When we have a crisis or problem, what is the good advice people give us? "You must have faith." Then what do we do? We try to generate faith. "I'm going to believe." Then we blow up the balloon and the test report comes and the pin is pricked into the balloon. You read the test report and the whole thing bursts. "There is no God, nothing is going to take place." This happens because there is no substance to that faith.

Why?

Those days I thought there is no substance because I haven't learnt enough about faith, I haven't studied enough about faith, I don't know about the truths of God. That can be true - but I think it's more than that.

The simple answer is you don't know Him. If you don't know Him, in a crisis, you'll never trust Him.

*A lot of us know about Him, we have studied about Him, we can give you answers about Him - but we don't know Him. **If you don't know Him, you and I aren't going to trust Him***

That's the problem here. Moses could not trust the words of God because he did not know Him yet.

The solution is very simple: If you don't have enough faith, if you worry, if you have internal struggles and you can't deal with life - relax. **Instead of trying to create faith from nothing, quietly get into a relationship with God.**

Seek Him early morning. I am now 100% convinced that without prayer you will never know Him. You can't know Him by study alone. You have to sit at His feet. In the night, before you sleep, sit at His feet and you quietly begin to realize you're hearing His voice and sensing His presence.

My own experience is it is like Beep Beep the road runner. This road runner is running away from Wile E. Coyote. Wile E. Coyote is a fox who is chasing Beep Beep. The roadrunner is very fast and every time he outfoxes the fox. So the fox chases the bird and they come to the edge of the cliff and the bird swings away in the nick of time. Then Wile E. runs off the cliff, but the thing is, Wile E. doesn't know that he has run off the cliff and is still running on thin air. It takes a few seconds for him to realize that he is off the cliff. Then he stops running and falls.

You call it realization in retrospect. You suddenly look back and realize that something took place there, you received an insight you never had before, you saw something you never saw before. Suddenly you realize that was the voice of God. Then you start knowing the One whom you are believing in.

Try it out and see. Any sinner is told the words, "Come follow me." In the Old Testament, He called a few people - but in the New Testament it is open to everyone. "Come follow me, walk in intimacy with me." How do you do that? You seek Him in the morning, seek Him in the night, you seek Him for the answers of your life and you grow in your relationship. When you have a relationship, you begin to sense what He can do, you begin to know through experience what He is capable of. Then you trust Him.

Until then, you can tell people to trust Him but they can't because they don't know the One who has called them.

The good news is that everyone can know Him. In the letter of James, James says, "Draw close to God and He will draw close to you." The assurance is there: If you seek Him, He will come looking for you. If you sit at His feet, He will comfort you and reveal His presence to you. The great gift we have is the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament - you sit in His presence and you allow Him to come into your life.

The miracle that happened yesterday at Mabole happened in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the worship of God, in an intimate moment of relationship. Suddenly, the impossible becomes possible.

So here is the key: Seek the Lord. We read about methods and patterns of prayer without starting to pray. The best way to start riding a bicycle is by getting on a bicycle and riding it. The best way to swim is by jumping into the water. You can read the best book written on swimming but you'll never swim until you get into the water. If you want to pray, then get up in the morning, sit at His feet and do the half an hour challenge. When the praise is saturated, then you worship God with your whole heart and your whole life and allow Him to become real and alive for you.

God realized the predicament of Moses, so see what He did:

Exodus 4:2

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

A staff is a glorified stick. He used a staff because he was on the slopes of Mount Sinai and he had to climb it. So God asked Moses what he had in his hands and he said he had a stick.

Exodus 4:3

The Lord said, "Throw it on the ground." Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it.

The staff was in the hand of Moses and it belonged to Moses. But God told him to let it go. In other words He said, "Dispossess yourself of that stick." When he let it go from his hands, it went into God's hands. Now the stick belongs to God. We talk about surrender, about letting go - but we don't let go of anything. Some people say, "I was looking to surrender my husband because I can't reform the fellow." People are ready to surrender what they can't control or handle.

What happened to the stick? It turned into a living thing. The stick was natural, but in the hand of God it became supernatural. What do you think God was trying to do? Was He entertaining Moses with a magic show? Test him? He had failed the test already.

Through the miracle, God was trying to make Moses realize that He can do what He has promised. A lot of people don't think that God can do much - because they haven't touched any kind of experiential act of God. They think God isn't really capable. They say, "We'll follow the philosophy and kind teachings of Christianity - but we'll live in the natural because nobody can break through the natural laws."

God immediately showed him that natural law can be transcended by Him and that He can do things people can't even imagine. It needs some relationship and time to work that out. See what happened next:

Exodus 4:4

Then the Lord said to him, "Reach out your hand and take it by the tail." So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand.

Now when it was in the hand of Moses it was a stick. When you have control over the incidents of your own life and you're running the show, the only result you'll get is natural. We don't realize that when God is in charge, the results are supernatural.

My argument is confirmed by the words of the Lord:

Exodus 4:5

"This," said the Lord, "is so that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers - the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob - has appeared to you."

He is trying to teach Moses, "I am the God of your ancestors. I want to introduce myself to you and I want to tell you that nothing is impossible for Me." The ancestors knew but Moses didn't. God did the same thing for Gideon and also to Samuel. He came and spoke and said, "I am the God of your ancestors but your generation has lost me. I want to reintroduce myself to you."

In the 21st century, you can say with certainty, that many of us have lost God - the God of our ancestors. Here He is: He says, "I want to show you that I am capable of the supernatural."

You know the story of God taking Moses to Egypt. He revealed the ten plagues of Egypt - and every plague was unleashed by the staff. He hit the staff on the ground and something happened. Poor pharaoh must be still wondering, wherever he is, because God was playing with his mind. God said to Moses, "Go and tell the pharaoh to let my people go." Then He said, "He will agree and then I will harden his heart - and he will not agree. Then you send the other plague." Poor pharaoh must have been wondering what happened to his personality. At one point he wants to let them go and the next time he doesn't want to.

When you have God on your side, your enemy has no chance - because God is not only working on your side but He is working inside the head of your enemy. That's what happened to Gideon as well. The enemy was confused in their mind when God was on the side of Gideon. See how powerful God is - and yet, we are acting as if God is powerless.

Quietly you begin to realize why He did that. It is only in retrospect that you can understand what He was doing. God was making the Hebrews learn to trust Him - otherwise they would never trust Him. Why? Because He was leading them to a dead end. Military strategists who studied the exodus tell us that it was the worst possible military strategy - because when they came to the sea, behind them was the pharaoh's army, on two sides was the desert - they had nowhere to go and they were boxed in. They would never have followed Moses there if they had not seen what God could do in Egypt.

That's how you build faith, that's how the work of God moves. If you look at Joseph Vaz - he was asked by the king to pray for rain. He could have made a nice excuse and pushed off because you can't trust God to bring down rain - you ask and if there's no rain then that's the end of his reign here on earth. But because he had grown in his knowledge of the Lord and relationship and had seen what God could do - Joseph Vaz was ready to take that step. Many of us aren't ready to take any step because we don't grow in that relationship.

When Moses and the people had come to the Red Sea and the situation was boxed in, now look at the doubting Moses. He had walked with God all those years, seen the hand of God in the events and look at him in this moment:

Exodus 14:13

Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid..."

What did he first tell the Lord? "Lord, how can I ever do this?" Now he is telling the people not to be afraid.

Exodus 14:13 continued

"...stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again."

How was he so confident? He had grown in his intimacy and knowledge of God.

What I have learnt is, if you don't have faith, don't strive for faith - forget about it, and simply start a relationship with God. If you're having an oppressive part of your nature that is really putting you down, don't try to fight it - grow in the knowledge of your God. At a certain level of your intimacy and growth, dealing with this darkness becomes effortless. You come to know Him who is greater than your darkness.

The devil wants us to engage in these struggles by our own strength, and he will put us down and keep us occupied for years. We tell the Lord, "Lord, the day I have victory over my nature I will come and serve you," and the Lord says, "Haven't you heard what I have said? All who are burdened and weary, come to Me."

Moses, as he grew in his intimacy and knowledge of the Lord, became aware of how powerful and capable He was. His fear evaporated but he also gave courage to other people. Here is Moses: hosting the presence of God. Moses had learnt a few things in this intimacy:

Exodus 14:14

"The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still."

He knew this because he knew the Lord who had called him. He had grown in this knowledge, he had grown in the intimacy, he had seen the little miracles. It started with a stick turning into a snake, and from that knowledge he grew over the years. As he grew, he began to know the ways of God. One thing he learnt was, the one thing that can obstruct God is your interference in His work. We keep interfering and that's why he said, "You need only to be still."

Internal stillness is the sign of those who have a knowledge of God. We aren't disturbed whatever the crisis is, we aren't disturbed whatever the situation is because they know Him who has called them. Everyone can know Him.

When Joseph Vaz was put into a cage in Bogambara, the king could see him. What impressed the king was his stillness. He was so composed, so still, so at peace that the king realized this man had something supernatural. You can't have it by trying to exercise it and trying to show you're still. It comes from a knowledge of Him.

The intimacy brings this out. That's why our investment is an investment of time to be at the feet of God. People come with problems to me, those days, foolishly I tried to guide them, advise them, teach them what to do and they go back and come back a week later with the same problem because their nature has not been touched, their fears aren't dealt with, their internal being is not ministered to.

Now I don't advise anybody - I only help them to find that moment to have this connection with the Lord. When you know Him, He will fix it deep inside.

Look at what happened and the promotion the stick got:

Exodus 14:15

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on."

That is partnership. "Why are you waiting here? Tell the Israelites to move on! You do your part and I'm going to do mine." Look at what happened:

Exodus 14:16

Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea...

This staff is the same staff of which God asked, "What have you got in your hands?" In the hand of Moses, the stick was able to part the Red Sea. It is not the stick but it is something greater - the One who has come to introduce Himself to Moses.

Exodus 14:16 continued

...to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground."

It is the stick that is used. When Jesus looked at the crowds and knew that they hadn't had lunch, he asked the disciples, "What have you got in your hands?" Some of them weren't playing fair and they said, "Some boy has food," and he took it from someone else. What they had in their hands was five loaves and two fish. They took it and gave it to Jesus, and Jesus took it, blessed it, broke it and gave it back - and it fed 5000 with 12 basketfuls left over. Why? Because the ownership was transferred from their hands into the hands of Jesus.

What about your life?

Your problems?

Your difficulties?

In whose hands are they? What have you got in your hands? "Lord, I've got this nice disease that I'm handling for the last so many years." He says, "Give it to me," because He can take that curse and turn it into a blessing. He can take your struggles, He can take your weakness, He can take your challenges and turn it into a blessing - a blessing you can't even imagine.

A supernatural future is waiting for you, if you just place it in His hands.

Yesterday at Mabole, another beautiful thing took place. There was a word of knowledge about a person whose knee was being healed. This person comes up to testify and has come from abroad, and this person had a big knee issue for years - unable to sit or to kneel. When the Blessed Sacrament was brought and we asked the people to kneel down, the person said, "I knelt down in faith and I continued to kneel down through the worship." She showed me and said, "Look, now the knee has become normal." I asked her to kneel and show me and she not only showed me but she walked around on her knees and showed me that she was completely liberated by the presence of God in that place.

If there - why not here? All the analysts, mathematicians, scientists, doctors, lawyers - take your knowledge because that's what you've got in your hands, and place it at the feet of Jesus, and say, "Lord, minister to me."