

The Invitation of Love (Retreat part 10)

This week receive and then reflect the following invitation from Jesus:

Over the past several weeks, it has been the delight I've longed for — to show you how much I love you. How I have wanted you to know how much I have desired to free your heart. And now that you have asked me what you can do — what return you could make for such love — I feel eager to invite you to be with me.

Please be with me in the mission I have from my Father. "Because God has chosen me to tell the good news to the poor, to announce freedom for prisoners, to give sight to the blind, to free everyone who suffers."

And I need you. I need your support and your free heart. It won't always be easy. But we will be together every time you are with me in loving. If you are with me in the struggle of love, we will grow together in love in ways I can ask you only to imagine. If you are with me in the dying to self-love that is our mission, then you will be with me in the fullness of life, forever. God's reign is at hand. Together we can bring it closer. Please be with me.

Consider this invitation all week. Feel it. It is the call of our baptism into Jesus. It isn't imaginary. It is very real. How special we are to receive such an invitation of love!

As with the men and women with whom Jesus entered into deep intimacy, their questions, their fears, their excuses, their other plans, and their natural reluctance to trust all became part of their encounter and ultimate surrender to Jesus. We ourselves want to know what we are going to be asked to do. We are called to pray this week with these questions, these reluctances, these fears well in hand and heart. They are the places where he met Peter, Nicodemus, the early church, and all the saints. We pray within the truth of our truths. Jesus meets us the way he finds us, but we have to find our fears and distrusts in order to be intimately met.

Out of love we were called into life; out of love we were called from death through sin; out of love we are constantly being called into trusting what real life can be with and alongside Jesus. His call to us is a freedom from and a freedom for. The *from* we know; the *for* is the cause of our fear and the platform of our prayer. We pray for the desire to know him and his personal love for us so deeply that, with our fears before us, we can slowly let him take them away one tremor and one tremble at a time.

Pray in these or similar words...

Dear Lord,

I feel your invitation. Are you asking me to go someplace I've never been? Maybe it's someplace new but, at the same time, someplace right here at home. It's different. I'm different. But you, my loving God, would be with me in it? If I got frightened, you would be there? I feel your promise not only that you will be with me but also that the love between us will grow. What a dizzying thought!

In the past weeks, I have been amazed at the depth of love I feel growing between us, Jesus. I feel your presence in my prayers, and I sometimes get self-conscious, wondering whether I'm a little crazy for imagining a deep feeling coming from you. But in the quiet of my prayer, I know it's real. There is a very real love that is deepening between us. It makes me feel some deeper longing for you.

Let me sit quietly with this invitation, Jesus. I feel your calling me to something, but I'm not sure what. I feel an emptiness inside that I know you can fill, a yearning for some way to draw closer to you.

Be with me, Lord, as I pray. Stay with me as I contemplate the invitation you hold out to me. Be with me. Fill me. Let me feel your love. Thank you for this call you are sending me. Give me the patience to stay with it this week, to pray with it, and to be patient with it.