

## All You Senses, Praise the Lord

For years, I lived in an old seminary in Grand Coteau, Louisiana. My third-floor bedroom window was about level with the tops of the trees which surrounded the building. Poking out of the sea of treetops, the steeple of the wood-frame country church was clearly visible. All of it—the church, the trees, and the seminary building—were more than a hundred years old. I was the only thing that was young in this scene.

Most mornings, I woke up before sunrise and stumbled downstairs for a large cup of coffee. When I returned with it, I turned off my air-conditioning and cracked open the window so that I could feel the warm, humid breeze and listen to the winding-down of the nighttime insects (What were they? Crickets? Grasshoppers? Cicadas?) and the winding-up of the birdsong of the day.

And I began to pray. Sometimes my brain got going and I thought holy thoughts or imagined something sacred. But other times I just sat in the stupor of not-yet-awake-ness and let my five senses do the work of communicating with the One who created it all.

But one morning it struck me that every one of my five senses were engaged in this pre-dawn ceremony. My smell and taste relished the strong, rich Louisiana coffee. My air-conditioned skin suddenly was awakened by warmth and humidity. My ears enjoyed the operatic drama of cicadas and mocking birds. And my eyes feasted on the emerging dawn displaying before me an old unmoving steeple-cross serenely presiding over mighty Oaks.

I did not rationally construct a ritual involving all five senses. The chair facing outward, the open window, the strong cup of coffee—they converged slowly—seemingly accidentally—over time. And this makes me wonder: did each one of my five senses gently poke and prod my unconscious self until that sense, too, could absorb God first thing in the morning? Or, perhaps the senses conspired together to make sure that every hungry human receptacle in me was taking in God in one accord? Either way, it makes me think of Augustine's insight about restless hearts. Perhaps it is not only our hearts that are restless for God. Perhaps our nose and ears and eyes and skin and tongue are ravenously craving God as they awake to a new day.

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