

St John's men's group notes 2024-07-02

A suggestion from Micheal Mack for a topic: Discuss current political issues with a focus on how to navigate them in our faith. To have such a topic, we all would need to not let our bias create tension in the discussion. One of our rules is not to talk about politics but if we can approach this topic as fellow Christians and respect each other, this may be an interesting topic.

The book "The Practice of the Presence of God" by Brother Lawrence was brought up as a possible next book to read. A beautifully simple but profound book about being with Jesus each and every day. This book is soul nourishing and deeply challenging. Brother Lawrence was a man of humble beginnings who discovered the greatest secret of living in the kingdom of God here on earth. It is the art of "practicing the presence of God in one single act that does not end." He often stated that it is God who paints Himself in the depths of our soul. We must merely open our hearts to receive Him and His loving presence. For centuries this unparalleled classic has given both blessing and instruction to those who can be content with nothing less than knowing God in all His majesty and feeling His loving presence throughout each simple day.

Available on Amazon in paperback for \$6.20', and also available online for free from Project Gutenberg.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/5657/pg5657-images.html>

We continued with our discussion of "New Seeds of Contemplation".

Don't be individualistic: not to separate our self from others As St Paul says we are many parts of one body. We all have gifts/talents, and none are better or more important than another.

Merton had an experience in his life while standing on a street corner, He saw God in all those who walked by. We need to see God in all men. Discussion: Do we see God in people that are pure evil? Gods should be in us as a light to others

We discussed how Merton often times seems to contradict himself in his writings.

in Contemplative prayer. don't hold onto your thoughts. This seems like a very difficult thing to do since our mind is constantly thinking of many things.

As part of our discussion, it was mentioned that it would be interesting to view the William F. Buckley vs Gore Vidal debates. They are available on YouTube.

Gore Vidal (1925-2012) was an American writer and public intellectual known for his epigrammatic wit. His novels and essays interrogated the social and sexual norms he perceived as driving American life. William F. Buckley Jr. (1925–2008) was an author and political commentator. In 1955, he founded the influential conservative magazine *National Review*.

It was decided that we will skip many chapters and will read the last 3 chapters in "New seeds of Contemplation". Ch 16, 17 & 18. This will end our readings for this book.

Next meeting will be Tuesday July 16 at 6 pm in the church hall.