

# **‘Be still and know that I am God’**

Occasionally, on retreats, I will use the following meditation.

Begin with the Scriptural quote: “Be still and know that I am God.” Just sit quietly in chapel, or in a comfortable chair at home, and ponder that meditation. Let yourself be still, and let God be God.

Second, alter the sentence ever so slightly to read: “Be still and know that I am”. When Moses met God in the burning bush, he asked God what his name was. God replied: “My name is ‘I Am.’” God is the eternal present moment. God is eternal being.

Third, edit the sentence again to read: “Be still and know that.” Know what? Just know. Just know that God is, and that God is in charge. We look at life with such limited human vision. God looks at life and knows. When we just get quiet enough to just know, it’s enough just to know that we know. It’s enough to know that we are one with God. Often in our busyness, we are individual egos – individual mind-bodies – running around doing all kinds of things. When we just know, we know that just to be is enough. Let God be in charge of life and of our personal lives.

In philosophy class, we learned that “God’s essence equals his existence.” In other words, to be God is to simply be. To know that, and to know ourselves as part of existence, is to know ourselves as part of God. In the quiet we know who we are. Then, when we take that awareness into our busyness, all of our action is transformed by that awareness. We go about doing the work of God.

Now, shorten the sentence again. “Be still.” A very humble man was once asked what he did in his long hours sitting before the Blessed Sacrament. The man replied very simply: “Not much. I just sits there and looks at God, and God sits there and looks back at me.” In simple terms, that might be the highest state of contemplation. Yes, some saints have indeed had fabulous experiences of God at various times. We may have similar mind-altering experiences on occasion. But mostly contemplation is just sitting in God’s presence, and letting what Bishop Fulton Sheen once called the “radioactivity of God’s love” transform us. As Americans we love to do. God just asks to be.

Finally, let’s edit the sentence one more time to just “Be” A very holy older priest used to go to chapel every afternoon and fall asleep in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. A much younger, self-righteous member of the community once chastised the older priest for his behavior: “If all you’re going to do is fall asleep in chapel, why don’t you just stay in your room and fall asleep there?” And the kindly older priest replied to the earnest young priest: “Because even an old dog can fall asleep at its master’s feet!” If you’ve ever loved a pet, just the pet’s presence makes

you feel good. There's nothing like a cat purring on your lap to bring you into the now. There's nothing like the adoring look of your dog looking at you with unconditional love, to make you keenly aware of God's so much greater unconditional love.

We Catholics can be busy pray-ers. We say lots of words, sometimes official words, even necessary words, as well as private devotional prayers. We seem to like to be busy and anxious even in our prayers just in case God won't notice us, or to make sure we tell God exactly what to do. Words are helpful, certainly necessary for public worship. But the purpose of all prayer and all prayers is simply to bring ourselves and our world into the presence of God. When we go through life with the consciousness of God always living with us, always living in us, and always living through us, then life itself becomes a constant prayer.

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