

How did Jesus become the friend that everyone tries to avoid?

I was reading a spiritual book a few days ago, and I was struck by one line: Jesus “pursues you from morning to night, and you avoid Him as much as you can.”

It’s a horrible thought, but sadly, all too relevant for many of us.

Was there ever a person with whom you just did not get along? I can think of a few individuals in my youth I found annoying, and who would always show up at a time when I least wanted to interact with them. I remember trying to avoid them or making excuses to get out of hanging out with them. I am ashamed by my immaturity, and I am glad that type of behavior ended with my adolescence.

But this quote about the way we treat Jesus startled me. Am I treating Jesus like I would a clingy and annoying friend? Jesus is present from the moment I wake up, and he is with me until the moment I fall asleep at night. How do I interact with him? How much of that time do I ignore him?

When you go to church, do you complain, “Do we have to go?” Is it the same sentiment as when your spouse schedules a get-together with a friend that you really did not want to see? “Hey, why are we getting together with *them*?”

In the evening, do you see a religious book or the rosary and decide on watching a television show because you are too tired? Or, are there times when you want Jesus to go away? Perhaps, you enjoy the occasional immoral show or a bit of pornography. Do you see Jesus as a party pooper?



“Hey, I am good most of the time, but now, it’s time for me to have some enjoyment without Jesus around.”

It’s sobering to think that we treat anyone who loves and desires to be with us in this manner, but it’s particularly disheartening that we treat God, who is infinite love and goodness, like a clingy, annoying friend.

For the past year, I have been reflecting on the essential elements of a Catholic mentality. These fundamental principles are the ones that every Catholic should have ingrained in their mind, but, they seem foreign, even to devout Catholics, because we live immersed in a secular mentality. One such principle is the centrality of God in all things.

In order to place God back at the center of all things, we need to have a better understanding of the omnipresence of God. God is fully present everywhere; we just need to learn how to better see him. One of the simplest proofs for God’s existence is nature. Can you see the majesty of God when you stare at the stars, or when you see a unique flower, or when you encounter a beautiful animal? All of these scenes in nature, for me, point to the Creator, the one who designed and made all things.



Science is often used to assault religion, but is not God behind the entire physical world? When I hear of the vast expanse of the universe, it points to an infinite God. A simple physics equation demonstrates the wonder of God’s design. The great Catholic philosophers of the past always maintained a synthesis between science

and faith, which has unfortunately been undone in the modern period. I would counter, however, that new scientific discoveries should not challenge the existence of God, but provide a better understanding of how he works in the world.

We must also work to see God in other people. We can see God more easily in those who we love and are closest to us. Every parent knows the sensation of holding a newborn baby in their hands and feeling the presence of God.

Every person is made in the image and likeness of God, and Jesus comes to us in the presence of individuals who we do not know or do not like. We need to treat everyone like we would treat Jesus; there are no exceptions. We need to treat those who annoy us the most as we would treat Jesus. We need to treat people who we meet in chance encounters as we would treat Jesus. We should revolutionize all our daily interactions using this Christocentric perspective.

The presence of God should also inform all of our actions. We often act differently in public than we do in private. We also act differently in the light of day than in the darkness of the night. God, however, sees everything. He is equally present when we are in a crowd as when we are alone. Thus, there should be no difference in the moral life that we showcase in public and our true selves that comes out in private. We could, for example, imagine that Jesus is physically present to us in the same room. Would we act any differently in front of Jesus than by ourselves? We should not.

The presence of God is a lens through which we should see all our actions. Once we start wearing those lenses, we should begin to shift our priorities. All our actions, which we thought were so important – gaining wealth, being entertained, seeking pleasure – would become less important, and conversely, spiritual actions – praying, adoration, serving other – would rise in importance.



God also knows and allows everything that happens to us, the good and the bad. If we had a perspective which includes God, then it provides context for all the bad things that happen in the world. Sometimes the “bad” turns out to be not so bad when God is added to the equation, or other times, God can make sure that good comes from the bad. We also can reflect on all the good things that happened to us – success at work, a good conversation, nice weather. We begin to see them as not as coincidences or as the result of our efforts, but as the work of God. The more we see God and his goodness everywhere, the more we realize that everything is a blessing from God, and the more grateful and appreciate we will become.

In addition to having a greater awareness of God’s presence, we need to strive to diminish the amount of time and attention we give to our desires. If we want to grow spiritually, we need to surrender our wills, completely. We need to give up our wishes. We need to give up our wants. We need to give up everything. It is hard, especially at first, but the more we surrender, the freer and more liberated we will feel. The experience has been likened to using a parachute, which cannot be deployed until you leap. Likewise, God cannot guide you and help you grow, until

you make the great spiritual leap.

God's will is on the other side of the great leap, and the ultimate goal is to conform your will to his will. We accomplish this by placing all our trust in God, and believing that he will take care of us. It's a scary proposition to trust another individual, but God knows what is best for us. He is motivated by pure love for us, and he is all powerful. We can have complete confidence that God will provide for us, and thus, the result of this complete trust in God is a profound peace.

As God becomes a more central part of our life, we will also have a better understanding of him and his attributes. We will recognize his omniscience and omnipotence. We will come to experience his infinite love, goodness, and mercy, and as we come to know God better, we will become closer to him. We will desire to be in his presence more, and adjust our lives to be in a constant state of prayer and adoration.

I began with the harsh realization that for some, Jesus "pursues you from morning to night, and you avoid Him as much as you can." This attitude stems from the fact that we fail to put Jesus at the center of our lives. By making Jesus the center of our life, we will no longer avoid him, but meet his pursuit with a profound embrace.