

# Prayer in Faith

“Be still and know that I am God.” Ps 46:10

These words are at the center of my prayer. I first discovered this deep thirst for silence and stillness when I was “running on empty as a new lawyer and volunteer with the Catholic Church in rural Idaho.

My work was exhilarating, but exhausting much of the time. It was amazing, but hard. I was called upon to give myself to others which I would do, but what to do when the well ran dry? Where could I go to find refreshment to drink until satisfied?

The team leader for our volunteer group arranged a long weekend retreat for the five of us serving in that huge rural country. There was a Benedictine Monastery of women who offered retreats in north central Idaho (Cottonwood), where the craggy, black mountains met the rich, warm plains of ripening wheat. We arrived in October when the air was cool and the pine covered mountain behind the motherhouse was dressed with the deep red of sumac and brilliant shimmering, golden leaves of birch trees. Simply exploring the vast property of the monastery grounds helped restore my empty well, but I knew it would be impossible for me to make the three and a half hour drive to that idyllic place very often.

Somehow our retreat leader knew what to add to our few days of rest and repose; she helped teach me to pray. At first, my mind was recalcitrant and wandering as I attempted to find that warm, interior place of sanctuary that would allow me to hear God. I continued to try...and try...and try again. The silence was not truly silent, but invaded by the business of mind. I could hear nothing but myself despite all my efforts.

One afternoon I went alone to the top of that craggy mountain behind the monastery and made my way through a wild field of uncut oats to the gnarled oak standing sentinel at the other side. There was a breeze that cooled my sun drenched face. I settled against that tree and began to concentrate on the words from the psalm, “be still and know I am God.” Finally, I was able to surrender into the stillness and given the gift of silence, the way to the living water that filled my well; a spring to which I

often have returned ever since.

*This is the fourth article in a six-week series on the fall session of Why Catholic? Diane Barr is chancellor for the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Next week's article will be by Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski.*