



# Monastic Musings

## *Living in and Practicing the Presence of God*

Spring 2018

### *Spring – a Time for Growth* *by: Right Reverend Barb Martzall*

As I am sitting here writing with my computer, I see wonderful blue sunny sky; the trees are blossoming out their leaves and/or flowers, and the grass is green. So life must be good. Our cat is taking her nap in the cat tower as though she has no care in the world. So life must be good. In a few weeks I am going to be an aunt again. So life must be good. But really is life good? That depends on what you use as your personal yardstick to determine good and bad. Do you only look at the material things around you to make the determination? Do you take into consideration the environmental things to make the determination? Do you take into consideration your spiritual feelings to make the determination? Do you take into consideration the spiritual feelings of others around you to make the determination?

You see, there are so many things to take into consideration to determine if life is truly good around you. If one really takes each of the things I have listed as a way to measure good or bad, one would probably find that they cannot say that life is either completely good or bad. Maybe where you are sitting at the moment, everything is good but just move down the street and things could very easily be bad for you.

Have you ever paid attention to the attitude of people before church, during church and then after church? Well I have and I can tell you that there are really times that I wonder what is going through people's minds. They come to the church building with some sort of anger. They join in with the service often really enjoying themselves with the music and sermon. Then they leave seeming to pick up with the anger that they brought with them to church. I used to say that they leave the garbage at the church door and when they leave, they pick up their garbage to take it with them. Why did they go to church to start with since they left with the same attitude that they came with?

Now that really is not what our Creator wants us to do at all. Our Creator wants us to live each and every day following one really simple rule: To Love/Treat Others as You Would Have Them Love/Treat You. That means that one has to live in a way that raises up everyone and everything in love - to stop putting divisiveness out into the world but start treating everyone as an equal but really our Creator cannot see any differences in us. We are all equal in the eyes of our Creator. We humans have created the separation of people, whether it is by sexes, color, country of origin, or faith. Our Creator has never had separation of people! If our Creator has never had separation of people then why are we doing it?

This world can only continue if people learn to work together. That means that you cannot force your ways on others. That means you cannot be a bully to get your way. It means that you have to learn to compromise in a way that everyone wins to make life better. When people come together and work together, then so much positive energy is provided and good things happen to everyone involved and even within the entire world. Before long, you would see plenty of food,

water, housing, friendships, jobs, etc. happening. People working together to better not only themselves but everything around them! What a beautiful concept that is! That is actually what our Creator wants for each and every one of His children. Can you picture a world without any wars? Can you picture a world without any lacks? Can you picture a world where faith is openly practiced by those who desire to do so and there is acceptance of those who are without any faith? A world where when someone is hurting, another person reaches out and helps them! A world where we remember that we are the guardians of this planet! Oh to only see that happen would be such a joy!

So what does it take to have this “dream” come true? One thing and that is to truly live and act in **all** ways: *To Love/Treat Others as You Would Have Them Love/Treat You*. Put aside all judgments and just help one another and the planet to be the best that it can be.




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## **True Prayer**

**by: Father Ron Lahti**

*Prayer can neither change God, nor bring His designs into mortal modes; but it can and does change our modes and our false sense of Life, Love, and Truth, uplifting us to Him. Such prayer humiliates, purifies, and quickens activity, in the direction that is unerring.*

*True prayer is not asking God for love; it is learning to love, and to include all mankind in one affection. Prayer is the utilization of the love wherewith He loves us. Prayer begets an awakened desire to be and do good. It makes new and scientific discoveries of God, of His goodness and power. It shows us more clearly than we saw before, what we already have and are; and most of all, it shows us what God is. Advancing in this light, we reflect it; and this light reveals*

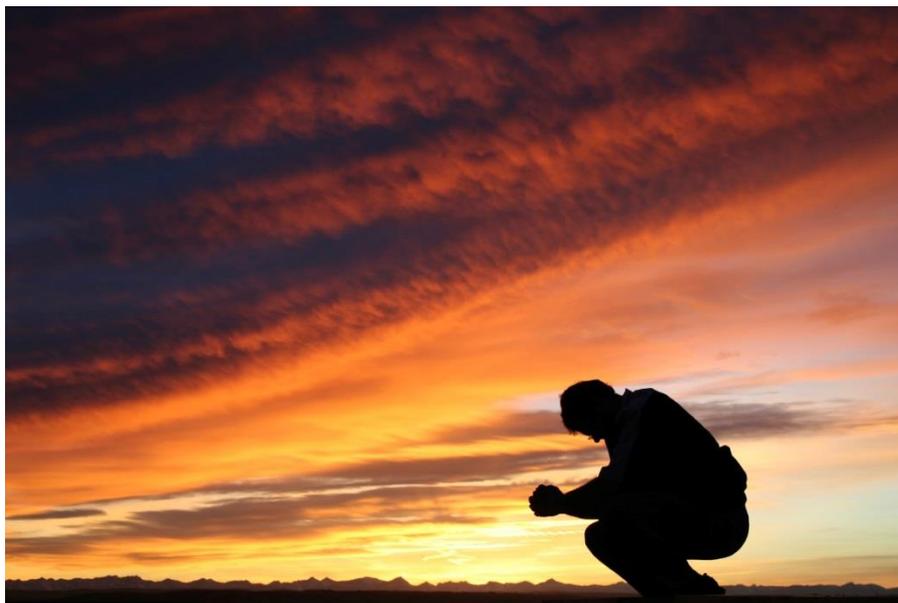
*the pure Mind-pictures, in silent prayer, even as photography grasps the solar light to portray the face of pleasant thought.*

-- Mary Baker Eddy, No and Yes, CSEC Internet Edition.

Living in Boston one becomes aware of the presence and importance of Mary Baker Eddy. For a time I lived about two blocks away from the Mother Church of Christian Science, founded by Mary Baker Eddy. In school I wrote a paper on her history and significance. I have always found her a fascinating person and theologian. However, this article is not about her *per se*, it's about one aspect of her thought.

A friend or family member faces a health or life challenge and we respond: "I'll keep you in my prayers". Lately, we have been overwhelmed by "Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families ..." as yet more of our children and adults are gunned down. A natural disaster occurs and we hear more "Our thoughts and prayers....". What does this mean? What do we mean by "keeping someone in our prayers"? By this do we mean to say "Wow, God has really dealt you a bad hand – let me see if I can change his mind and make things better"? Or do we mean: "Your circumstances are really bad – I know what you need, so let me tap the Big Guy's shoulder and fix things."? We can chuckle at these thoughts because they seem simplistic, even childish. But isn't that what we are really saying when we tell someone we are keeping them in our prayers? I know it's meant that for me.

But Mary Baker Eddy asks us to reconsider our attitudes and take a different look at prayer. "Prayer can neither change God, nor bring His designs into mortal modes..." We are not changing God. God is not someone who needs to be reminded to love someone, nor is God someone who needs to be "softened up" and so will wave his magic wand to make it better. Prayer is not coercing, bargaining or threatening to get what we want. "Prayer... can and does change our modes and our false sense of Life, Love and Truth, uplifting us to Him....It shows us more clearly than we saw before, what we already have and are: and most of all, it shows us what God is." Our prayers raise us up to God, to see a bit more clearly what God sees in a situation. Prayer does not change things...prayer changes us.



Does this mean I don't believe in prayer? Far from it. What I do mean is that we consider what we are doing when we pray – what is our intention? Is it to coerce God to make things go according to how we think they should be or do we seek to "know the mind of Christ" and to be

able to see the reality of a situation as God sees it? Do we seek to change things to suit our will? Or in prayer do we seek to be changed by God?

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## *Blessed Coincidences*

*by Rev. Mother Myrella LeClair*

Do you believe in coincidences? More importantly, are you even aware of coincidences when they occur and how those coincidences affect your life? For example, the other day I was thinking about what to write about for this newsletter and finding no spiritual inspiration whatsoever. At that point, I decided to go read the news on the internet at which time I felt compelled to read the daily lesson on a spiritual site that I had not visited for a month but which at one time I would visit daily. The daily lesson was "I rest in God".

I knew immediately that it was a coincidence to come upon that lesson because there are 366 lessons! At one time, I practiced the daily meditation, but over the last two months or so, I allowed external influences to disturb and distract me from spending time resting in God. My focus was on all of the snowstorms, bitter cold, hatred in our country and the world, and illness - anything but spending time in God's presence. So, it was not a wonder to me as to why I was suffering a spiritual drought. I chose to stay in the desert rather than rest in the life-giving Oasis, which is resting in God's presence.



(photo taken by Barb Martzall at the Quabbin Reservoir, Belchertown, MA)

Spending time in that Oasis gave me the inspiration that I needed. Our bodies require physical rest but more importantly, our spirits require spiritual rest so as to be reinvigorated and thus capable of returning to our spiritual journey. As I was resting, I realized that God is always communicating with us either directly or through guides of various forms, be they angels, other humans, animals, Nature in general, etc. If we are truly **listening and receptive** to our guides, we will recognize that there are many coincidences in our lives. All of these seeming coincidences impact our lives in some way and hold lessons for us to either learn and/or teach. In some cases, the reason for the coincidence may not manifest itself immediately; however, at a later time, you might remember something that at the time it occurred, you did not even recognize as a coincidence. For example, I went to a local salon to complain to the manager about the bad haircut that I had received from one of her employees. While the manager was fixing my bad haircut, our conversation turned to a discussion of my needing someone to do

some handyman type work at my home. It just so happened that her fiancé does that kind of work in addition to doing lawn care and snow plowing. Hiring him took a load off of my mind (and off of my body as well). God provides; we just need to be attuned to the guidance provided to us.

After a long dry spell of not reading novels, I decided to buy my favorite author's new novel. The story line (science vs. religion and the relationship between them) led me to decide to re-read another book – one which alluded to the convergence of science and religion/spirituality and also focused on the energies that emanate from all life forms. Due to my health and other issues, my energy level was just about non-existent; however, re-reading that book along with spending time in meditation and being out in Nature has re-energized me.

I truly believe that those two events were blessed coincidences that my spirit recognized as such because I took the time to rest in the Oasis and to listen to my spiritual guides. I urge everyone to spend time in the Oasis. Your spirit will be refreshed, and you will realize just how many blessed coincidences that have occurred in your life and know that there are still many more to come.



(photo taken by Barb Martzall at Shoreline Park, Mountain View, CA)

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