

Let Jesus In



Fr. Cedric Pisegna, C.P.

William Holman Hunt was an English painter who lived in the 1800s. In 1854, he painted a portrait of Jesus holding a lantern and knocking at a door. The painting, *The Light of the World*, was displayed at an art gallery. One of the comments he received was this: “Holman, we love the portrait of Jesus. He is royal, radiant, and truly the light of the world. However, we noticed that you forgot something. Jesus is knocking at a door with no knob on it!”

“I’m so glad you noticed that important detail,” Hunt replied. “That is the door spoken of in Revelation 3:20: ‘Behold I stand at the door and knock. Whoever hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with you and you with me.’ You see, that door is the door of your heart. Jesus will never force or barge his way into a person. Rather, the only way that door can be opened is from the inside where the knob is located.”-

Only *you* can open the door of your heart to God!

The Knock

When I was eighteen years old, I began to hear that knock and voice of Jesus. The knock and voice can come in many ways. For me, it was the voice of my conscience. A person’s conscience is our most secret core and our sanctuary. There we are alone with God whose voice echoes in our depths. (*Catechism* #1776)

The late priest Henri Nouwen wrote a book, *The Inner Voice of Love*. He states in one of his reflections, “Do you really want to be converted and transformed? *Trust* the inner voice that shows you the way.” We are all familiar with our inner voice. Let your conscience be your guide.

For me, I heard the knock when I got out of bed each morning. “What is this? I’m not happy. There is more to life than I am aware. I’m not satisfied.” This voice continued day

after day until I made a move. I heard the knock and turned the knob. I opened the door by praying, reading Scripture, and seeking God in a concerted way. I opened the door by simply believing in God and his goodness. This led to a profound encounter with God a few months later that would revolutionize my life.

To have supper or a meal with someone in the Mediterranean world, as in ours, means intimacy. When you have a meal with another, you look at them, speak, listen, and get to know them more fully. The more you “sup” with someone, the deeper you get to know that person. Jesus offers not only his presence, but also communion with his person. This truth is celebrated at every Eucharist we participate in. Jesus wants a personal relationship with us and us with him. The whole of the four Gospels centers upon the person of Jesus and getting to know him.

For this to happen, the knob must be turned and the door opened.

Self-Emptying

The Scriptures tell us that although Jesus was in the form of God, he *emptied himself* and became human. This self-emptying comes from the Greek word *kenosis* in the Bible. Jesus didn't cling to his status as divine. He became fully human and lowered himself even more surrendering himself to death, even the ignominious death by crucifixion. This radical self-sacrifice is what has redeemed us. Throughout his human life, Jesus never showed a hint of pride or selfishness, but in humility, always took the form of a servant and gave generously of himself.

The Twelve-Step Program (AA and others) teaches that humility is the foundation of change and growth. People who are always in control, selfish, and full of themselves will find it hard to improve and grow. One of the secrets to transformation is rigorous self-appraisal and honesty. Become quiet and listen

to your inner voice. Are you happy? Do you have unwanted behaviors? Do you need to change? People who “empty” themselves will be filled. People who are full of themselves have no room for God. Not many prideful people darken the door of the confessional. Several times during our life, we must examine who and where we are and humble ourselves. Humility turns the knob on the door of our innermost heart.

Suffering

Often, suffering can make us aware of the knock and enable us to hear what God is saying. The inner loneliness I felt when I was eighteen along with my inability to find happiness humbled me and opened me to more. I heard God inviting me to change. Admitting that you are powerless over some behavior or substance is the first step toward recovery in the Twelve-Step Program. Suffering and/or some type of bottoming out experience often is the catalyst to get a person to recognize their need. Our culture popularizes being powerful and rightly so, but not enough is said about the “gift” of powerlessness. As I write this, I am about to have partial knee replacement surgery on my right knee. I cannot express how this suffering has made me listen to life as well as my innermost heart. This weakness had made me radically depend on God and his love for me. Paul talked about his “thorn” of suffering and taught, “When I am weak, it is then that I am strong.” (2 Cor. 12:10) Paul found communion with the divine as well as supernatural strength through his sufferings.

Our sufferings can teach us and get us in touch with our heart of hearts if we will listen. They can lead us to radical dependence on God. Don’t waste your sufferings; they are too valuable! In every season of our life, we encounter new and different forms of pain that can bring us humility and move us along our journey.

Jesus' Lordship in Our Lives

Jesus wants communion with us. In addition, he wants to be “Lord” of our everyday decisions, thoughts, actions, and journeys. The one who “sups” with us wants to transform us into who he is.

I was ordained a Catholic priest on June 29, 1991. The Mass of Ordination was celebrated at our Passionist church in Chicago. During the rite, the ordination candidates are called forward by our formation director. When our name was announced, we were instructed to respond in some appropriate manner such as, “present.” When my director publicly announced my name, I stood up and said, “Here I am!” These were the words of Isaiah when God asked, “Whom shall I send?” We also sing that famous song, “Here I am, Lord,” wherein we sing, “I will go Lord if you lead me...” My response signified my giving of myself to God before all.

It is somewhat easy to empty yourself and give yourself to God in a public ceremony when everyone is watching and rooting for you. It really isn't all that hard to give yourself to God as you read this booklet. But Jesus wants to be Lord of our *everyday* life. Often we are tempted to look at lustful images on television. Swells of anger rise up to make us want to strike out or avoid others. Laziness saturates our life like a drenching rain squelching our dreams. We berate ourselves because we are never good enough and feel God is against us. It is precisely at these moments when we must pause and open the door to Jesus. He wants communion with us 24/7, not just when we go to church or read religious documents. Emptying ourselves means surrendering in the common, human moments of our everyday life. We open the door to Jesus when we give him our gaze, what we read, how we speak, our sexuality, our time, our money, as well as our passion.

Abandon Yourself

Doors have hinges because they are meant to be opened and reopened. Perhaps we once opened the door in one area of our life, but now it is shut. Jesus keeps knocking. The *good* news is, any door that is shut for however long can be opened and reopened!

Blessed Charles de Foucauld lived in the 1800s, founded a community dedicated to the poor, and was beatified by Pope Benedict XVI in 2005. Charles humbled himself and opened the door to Jesus through prayer, service, and simplicity. He continually opened the door of his life to God as he prayed.

Prayer is one of the ways you can turn the knob and open the door of your heart. Charles' prayer of abandonment can help you keep the door open when faced with the multitude of decisions, thoughts, emotions, and actions that real life brings. Behold, Jesus stands at the door of your heart and knocks. It is time to let Jesus in.

Blessed Charles' Prayer of Abandonment to God

Father, I abandon myself into your hands.
Do with me what you will.
Whatever you may do, I thank you.
I am ready for all; I accept all.

Let only your will be done in me
and in all your creatures.
I wish no more than this, O Lord.

Into your hands I commend my soul:
I offer it to you with all the love of my heart,
for I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself,
to surrender myself into your hands without reserve,
and with boundless confidence,
for you are my Father. Amen!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fr. Cedric Pisegna, C.P. is a Passionist priest who professed vows in September 1985. He was born in Springfield, Massachusetts and graduated from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst with B.S. in social work and a minor in Business. In addition, he has studied Philosophy at Southern Illinois University and has studied Speech and Drama at Northwestern University in Chicago. Fr. Cedric graduated from the Catholic Theological Union at Chicago in May 1990, receiving his Master of Divinity degree with Bible Specialization. He was ordained a priest on June 29, 1991.

Presently, Fr. Cedric preaches retreats and missions throughout the United States and Canada, ministering out of the Passionist retreat complex in Houston, Texas. He has preached over 500 missions for 30 years. Fr. Cedric produces a program for TV and Radio, *Live with Passion!*, which presently airs nationally and internationally on the Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN), Daystar, ETWN, and other networks. He has numerous CDs and DVDs on Christian living and has authored twenty-five books.

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