

Repetition of a Simple Theme Makes Prayer a Life Reality

Violin Concerto in D major, opus 35

by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Even while employing the finest conductor and violin virtuoso, a listening of this piece can be instant death for those with little or no appreciation of classical music.

Imagine being promised a wonderful concert and being assured you'd like it. This concerto is to be performed among a number of chosen pieces. You sit and listen, and listen some more. You wait and wait for the finale. It seems to never come. The major theme is repeated again and again and again. That's the beauty of this piece. Variations abound. And with each variation there is another crescendo with the listener expecting the end to be soon.

Tchaikovsky, like many composers of violin concertos, magnificently does the bait-and-switch again and again, pulling the listener in more and more. When at last the final notes are sounded, it is not the end expected. Yet it is an absolutely beautiful concerto that will challenge orchestra, conductor and soloist for ages, as it has in the past. (And they've just finished the first of three movements.)

The picture we're left with in the mind's eye is now uniquely ours, as each listener has responded to the music individually.



This semester we are invited to be like those at the symphony hearing Tchaikovsky. It is going to be painful for some. The repetition may become frustrating. The desired end may be slow in coming. The expected end most likely will not happen.

You see, God, in all of life, is the conductor of the music, and the violin virtuoso. We need to listen to the music so that it may become part of our very existence. It's the only way to get to the finale. We need to allow the various movements to expose ourselves, our hearts and souls, to the God who knows the heart.

The decision must be our desire. It will not be forced upon us any more than the grace of God is forced upon us. And we know in faith that this does not occur. God leaves it as free will and choice. Choosing to enter the concert hall is different than

hearing the music on a radio, in which case we can choose to change the station to our liking.

To hear the music, we must place ourselves before the Lord God. It is God who is doing the work.



In the practice of prayer, this is called our becoming aware of God's presence in our lives.

Start simply.

"God is present, here."

Say this to yourself, inwardly, while driving, at a red light, during a conversation, at work, when observing the beauty of a sunrise or sunset.

"God is present.

Thank you Lord for your presence."

GOD FIRST

Year Two, Part 3

The Prayer of Awareness



Notice, activities do not stop or necessarily slow down. Through its repetitive nature, this prayer becomes part of the fiber of life, not an intrusion.

Through the implementation of this practice, our awareness of God's presence begins to take shape in the activities of life. Our awareness of God's presence will also come to change our response to the many happenings occurring during these very activities.

"God is present here. Now."

Desire and diligence of practice are the only ways in which we can make this prayer of awareness of God's presence part of our life. But it is essential to growth in union with the God who is — the I AM. Let it become a mantra that takes place as easily as a breath.

"God is present here, now."

"Thank you for your presence Lord."

It doesn't seem like much. But it is not in the amount of words. Our constantly being mindful of God's presence is what is necessary. Eventually the presence of God will be realized in every breath, without a word being uttered. For now, we begin

slowly and with great patience and dedication in our practice of the awareness of the presence of God in our lives.

Sooner than we expect, we find ourselves caught up in the melody of God's music, our prayer, our awareness of God's presence. It becomes like that tune that we find humming over and over again, sometimes not knowing why. But we learn what it does for us.

Tchaikovsky's concerto runs 18 minutes, 12 seconds. The music God, which runs eternally, is creating in the heart, in the mind, in our life, is that which brings the Spirit's gifts to our awareness — the gifts of joy and peace and wholeness. We will begin to realize that God is becoming the center of our awareness, the director and the virtuoso. And we are really finding our true self as we become aware of the true God who blesses us with his presence.

That's for another time later on.



Past inserts are available at the rectory office, or may be found on the parish website:
www.stjohnthebaptistparish.net

Some Scripture Passages meant to help support our Practice of Awareness

Writing a short passage on a small piece of paper and having it in a pocket containing things we frequently use — such as our car keys, is a quick and easy way to become aware of the presence of God

We'll begin with some psalms.

Psalm 16:8-11 (God the Supreme Good)

I bless the Lord ever before me;
with him at my right hand
I shall not be disturbed.
Therefore my heart is glad
and my soul rejoices,
my body, too, abides in confidence;
Because you will not abandon my soul
to the nether world,
nor will you suffer your faithful one
to undergo corruption.
You will show me the path to life,
fullness of joys in your presence,
the delights at your right hand forever.

Psalm 51:12-13 (Prayer of Repentance)

A clean heart create in me, O God,
and a steadfast spirit renew within me.
Cast me not out from your presence,
and your holy spirit take not from me.

Psalm 4: 7-9 (Joyful Confidence in God)

Many say, "Oh, that we might see better times!"
O Lord, let the light of your countenance
shine upon us!
You put gladness into my heart,
more than when grain and wine abound.
As soon as I lie down, I fall peacefully asleep,
for you alone, O Lord,
bring security in my dwelling.

And from the first Letter of St. John

1John 4:13-16

*This is how we know that we remain in him and he in us, that he has given us of his Spirit. Moreover, we have seen and testify that the Father sent his Son as savior of the world. Whoever acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, **God remains in him and he in God.** We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us.*