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“Becoming a Healing Presence”

Antiochian Women Book Club – 2017

Study Questions – Chapter 1-5

Introduction –

1. The author offers an assumption on the way we interact with Christ and become children of the living God (pg. 15) Have you found this to be the case in your life with those around you?
2. The term “healing presence” is at the center of Dr. Rossi’s message. How do you understand this term as he presents it? (pg. 15,16)

Chapter 1 –

1. The state of silence and inner stillness, referred to by many of the Church Fathers and ascetics, can lead us to a closeness with God. How might we, as present-day Christians, begin this journey back into our hearts? (pg. 19ff)
2. One of the elders said, “Speech is the language of this world; silence is the language of heaven.” Can we really see ourselves letting go of sounds and activity in order to listen to God?
3. Our efforts toward stillness and silence may seem to produce negative thoughts or dryness, yet we are encouraged to continue. If so with you, did you give up or work on through it? (pg. 29)

4. Some use the Jesus Prayer or the name of Jesus as a “prayer word”. (pg. 28) If you have done so, have you found that helpful or perhaps used another? If not, will you consider beginning this discipline now?

Chapter 2 -

1. The name “Jesus” means “God saves”. It is the New Testament Greek term for the Old Testament, Joshua (Ya Hoshua) – “God saves”. See also, Matthew 1:21; Acts 4:12.
Think about what we are saying and praying when we utter the name of Jesus.
2. In this chapter, there is emphasis on our breathing the name of Jesus. In the Scriptures, the word for spirit and breath is the same. So our spirit is affected and activated by God as we breath the name. You may choose to discuss this and even practice it as a group or alone.
3. In the example of hearing the voice of God (pg. 36,37), does that bring to mind any times you may have been hearing God’s voice. Did you recognize it or fail to do so? Read again Moses’ experience at the burning bush (Exodus 3: 1-6) and that of Elijah on the mountain (3 Kingdoms 19: 9-18)
4. In the section, “Life as a Treasure Hunt” (pg. 37ff), we read of people receiving gifts from God in the “ordinary” times of daily life. Can you recall some of those moments when you (or someone you know) were granted such “treasures”? You may remember Jacob and the ladder (Genesis 28) or Ruth gleaning in the field of Boaz (Ruth 2:1-14)
5. Breathing, while essential to life, is an important part of one’s prayer discipline. Have you found a relationship between breathing and stillness/ calmness both in body and soul? Can you share that?

Chapter 3 -

1. Our Orthodox tradition teaches that the heart is at the center of every person’s life. If, as we believe, God dwells there doesn’t it behoove us to keep our hearts pure and open to the Lord? See Matthew 5:8. What are some of the ways by which our hearts can be cleansed and purified?

2. How do you understand the phrase “going into the heart”? Is this connected to prayer, stillness/quietness, silence, etc.? What has been your experience of descending into your heart? (pg. 57ff)
3. In the author’s account of the story of Johnny Appleseed, which traits in his life are especially meaningful to you? Never looking back? Simplicity of life? Living for others? Never seeking appreciation? Something else? (pg.59-61)
4. Although Jesus is in our heart by virtue of Creation and Holy Baptism, can we still find meaning in that He stands at the door of our heart and knocks? (Revelation 3:20) Is there something significant about our “opening the door and letting Him in”? (pg. 62)

Chapter 4 –

1. According to Dr. Rossi, what is the meaning of the term “vocation” in the life of a Christian? What is the relationship between vocation and calling? (pg. 65,66)
2. If I understand my vocation as being a healing presence, then my awareness of others moves to the forefront of my thinking. To what extent will this awareness motivate us to reach out to others as Christ did in His ministry?

“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”
(Philippians 2: 3,4)

3. Considering Met. Anthony’s quote (pg. 71), do you now – or have you ever – seen beauty in a person(s) who may have appeared outwardly ugly? What was your response?
4. Why do you think the name of Jesus has such a positive effect on human beings? (pg. 72)

“The name of Jesus is not simply a verbal pronunciation, but indicates His will, His life, His person, His very presence.”
(Orthodox Study Bible – footnote Acts 4:12)

5. Dr. Rossi states: “Sanctity is a process of subtraction.” (pg. 73) Think about and list some things in your life which have been (or need to be) subtracted as you walk your path to sanctity. (See also Ephesians 4: 25-32)

6. **“When we spread joy, we give others strength and hope, thereby becoming a healing presence.” (pg. 76) How do you find such joy to share with others?**

“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” (John 15:11)

“Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” (Nehemiah 8:10)

Chapter 5

1. **Gentleness is a virtue given by God (Galatians 5: 22,23). However, it is a matter of one’s personal will. Each person must decide to think gently and act in that manner.**

“Gentleness (meekness) is not passive weakness, but strength directed and under control.” (Orthodox Study Bible – footnote on Matthew 5:5)

Do you have the ability and will to exercise gentleness?

2. **Dr. Rossi notes that as people grow older, many also become more gentle. Do you suppose this has to do with:**

- a) **Reflecting on their own mistakes in life**
- b) **Preparing for their end of life**
- c) **Deteriorating health and lack of energy**
- d) **An appreciation for others around them**
- e) **Other?**

3. **Our author seems to place much trust in the value of a “smiling heart”. (pg. 86,87) Can you think of times when your smile brought good to another person? Have there not also been times when smiling may have meant more to you than to others?**

“A cheerful heart makes a man healthy” (Proverbs 17:24)

4. **In discussing “Gentleness Respects Boundaries” (pg. 87), Dr. Rossi cautions us against trying to assume the problems and sufferings of another and attempting to fix it by our own power. There are times when we help them more by understanding and encouraging them to make important decisions and work through their difficulties. Can you recall such situations in your life or someone close to you?**

“Bear one another’s burdens (heavy loads they can’t carry) ...” (Galatians 6:2)

“Each one shall bear his own load (responsibility, allotted amount).”

Galatians 6: 5)

5. **The art of listening is so important in all communications and relationships. Could it be said that, in many cases, listening attentively to others yields more fruit than speaking to them? (pg. 91ff)**

Dr. Rossi also notes: “Active listening to another when the other wants to be heard is an act of love”. (pg. 93) Do you listen well in your conversations?

James 1:19 – “So, then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath (anger).”

