Lenten CLC Week 2—Making Space for “Wow”

O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it. For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. / Wonderful are your works; / that I know very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed. How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! I try to count them—they are more than the sand; / I come to the end—I am still with you.

—Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

“If you look at what you have in life, you'll always have more. If you look at what you don't have in life, you'll never have enough.”—Oprah Winfrey

“When we are stunned to the place beyond words, we’re finally starting to get somewhere. It is so much more comfortable to think that we know what it all means, what to expect and how it all hangs together. When we are stunned to the place beyond words, when an aspect of life takes us away from being able to chip away at something until it’s down to a manageable size and to file it nicely away, when all we can say in response is ‘Wow,’ that’s a prayer.”—Anne Lamott, Help, Thanks, Wow (73)

➢ Do you make time for “wow” in my life? If not, what prevents you from doing so?
➢ Who is a person that “wows” you? What qualities and attributes do you admire about them? How do you feel when you encounter this person?
➢ What are the words, feelings, and/or experiences that you associate with “wow?” Do these words/feelings/experiences feel “holy?” What is your reaction to Anne Lamott’s idea that “wow” is a prayer?
➢ The author of Psalm 139 writes about being “wowed” by God, who is in turn wowed by the psalmist. Consider for a moment that God is wowed by you. How does this truth sit with you?
➢ What is one concrete way that you might practice “wow” during this season of Lent?

For further prayer & action:
• Spend some time each day this week praying the words of Psalm 139. Read these words slowly and reflectively; make them your own. As you pray, imagine that God is being wowed by you.
• Make a brief examen each day and reflect on what wowed you over the course of the day. Offer a prayer of gratitude for each wow you experience, and consider whether the wow calls forth any particular response in you.
• Spend some time reflecting on a person in your life who wows you. Take some time to make them a gift and/or write them a short note explaining what you admire about them. Share your work of art and/or words with this person.
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Featured prayer practice of the week: Examen

At the heart of Ignatius’ understanding of God and the spiritual life was the conviction that God could be found in all things. Out of this belief, he developed a method of prayer to help discover precisely where God was moving in his life: the examen. The examen is a simple but powerful form of prayer that invites us to review our day prayerfully while looking for clues that reveal God’s presence and movement in our daily lives.

While the examen is highly flexible form of prayer, one of the most common features is

Dennis Hamm, SJ suggests five steps for praying the examen.¹ These five steps can be remembered as Light – Thanks – Feelings – Focus – Future:

1. **Pray for light.** Begin with a prayer for illumination as you review your day.
2. **Review the day in thanksgiving.** Replay the movie of your recent history (the last 12-24 hours) as though you were watching an ESPN highlight reel. Pay attention to the moments when God “wowed” you.
3. **Review the feelings that surface in the replay of the day.** Rewind your highlight reel and as you review it once more, this time pay attention to any significant feelings that surfaced, whether positive or negative.
4. **Focus on one of the feelings and pray from it.** Chances are, one of the feelings you experienced was more intense than the others. That intensity may be an invitation for you to spend some time praying with that feeling. Talk to God, just as you would to a friend, about whatever feeling you are focusing on.
5. **Look to the future.** Turn your attention to the future and imagine all that awaits you in the next 12-24 hours. If there is something you feel you need, this is your chance to ask for it.

Mark Thibodeaux, SJ suggests a different 5-step method for praying the examen. His method centers on a 5-R mnemonic device:

1. **Relish** the moments that went well and all of the gifts I have today.
2. **Request** the Spirit to lead me through my review of the day.
3. **Review** the day.
4. **Repent** of any mistakes or failures.
5. **Resolve**, in concrete ways, to live well tomorrow.²