

Searching for Meaning

Week Two

encountering
Christ

What are the deepest longings of your heart?

Jesus said, "I came so that they might have life, and have it in abundance."

John 10:10

Catholic writer Robert Ellsberg describes the personal quality that set apart saints from the people of their times as a "presence of life in abundance." As everyday people with real struggles, the men and women who we call "saints" were people who longed for more out of life. They were people who searched and discovered that the path to God and fulfillment in life was "*at the same time the path to their own true selves.*" The searching heart of the saints reminds us, as Ellsberg points out, that we were created "to be fully alive," and that "it was toward this goal...that Christ pointed the way." As he reflects:

"What might it mean to be fully alive?"

Obviously it is not the same as simply eating and breathing.

Nor is it expressed in a flurry of manic activity.

To be fully alive is a matter of living out of the deepest part of oneself.

Call it the heart or the soul;

These are words that describe the central and intimate core of our being,

The place where we are most truly ourselves.

Because I have seen you Lord,
And desire to see you again,
I want to believe.
I saw you, yes, when as a child
I was baptized in water.
Then, cleansed of ancient blame,
I could see you unveiled...

Now my eyes are tired
from seeing
So much light without really
seeing;
Stumbling through the darkness
of the world,
I proceed like one who's blind
yet sees.

You who gave sight to the blind
And to Nicodemus as well,
Infuse into my arid pupils
Two drops fresh with faith.

*Pope Francis' Prayer,
"God's Plan Unveiled"*

*Loving God,
We beg you, make us truly alive.
Amen*

From the Eucharistic Prayer of St. Serapion of Thmuis

For Prayer and Reflection

As you contemplate the deepest longings of your heart, consider Pope Francis' reminder that "God reveals Himself in the historical mystery of our own movement through grace and sin." He reminds us that God wants to reveal His loving plan for our life's fulfillment *always* – as we seek out His path for our lives, and as we sometimes find ourselves lost in our search.

You are invited to spend some quiet time today prayerfully reflecting on the deepest longings of your heart by writing responses to these questions.

In My Daily Life

Most people would agree that recognizing the "deepest longings of your heart" is a lifelong spiritual journey.

What comes to mind when you contemplate the deepest longings of your heart?

Write down a few words that describe the longings of your heart at this point in your life.

In Our Catholic Faith

Our Catechism explains how "God has placed in our hearts a longing to seek and find him."

When have you experienced a longing for God?

In Friendship with Jesus Christ

*Imagine Jesus telling you, personally, that He came into the world so that **you** might have life.*

How does your heart respond?

Sharing the Journey

If you feel comfortable, take some time to share your insights with a friend, family member, spouse, spiritual companion or fellow parishioner.



Encountering Christ is a series of personal faith reflections offered during Mass.

Each reflection will build upon the last.

This handout is for you to keep as personal faith resource.

SOURCES:

Pope Francis (2013). "God's Plan Unveiled." *Open Mind, Faithful Heart*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 126-131.

Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church (2011). San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 13.

Ellsberg, Robert (2003). *The Saints' Guide to Happiness*. New York: Doubleday, 3-5.