

Praying With John Donne

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Selected Donne Poems and Devotional Questions by Dr. Robert G. Collmer for March 3-8, 2014

Monday March 3, 2014

Annunciation

Salvation to all that will is nigh;
That All, which always is All everywhere,
Which cannot sin, and yet all sins must bear,
Which cannot die, yet cannot choose but die,
Lo, faithful Virgin, yields himself to lie
In prison, in thy womb; and though he there
Can take no sin, nor thou give, yet he will wear,
Taken from thence, flesh, which death's force may try.
Ere by the spheres time was created, thou
Wast in His mind, who is thy Son and Brother;
Whom thou conceiv'st, conceived; yea thou art now
Thy Maker's maker, and thy Father's mother;
Thou hast light in dark, and shutst in little room,
Immensity cloistered in thy dear womb.

Monday Devotional Questions:

- To whom is the poem addressed?
- As you read this poem, what word or phrase most captures your attention and spirit?
- Is the Roman Catholic doctrine of "Immaculate Conception" in the poem?
- Is the "Virgin Birth" in the poem?
- How does this poem speak to you about God's nature and our salvation?

Tuesday March 4, 2014

A Hymn To God the Father

I.

Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun,
Which was my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt thou forgive that sin, through which I run,
And do run still, though still I do deplore?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

II.

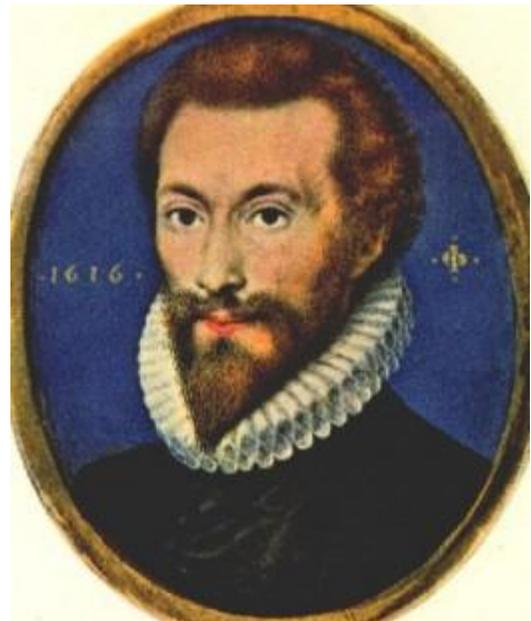
Wilt thou forgive that sin which I have won
Others to sin, and made my sin their door?
Wilt thou forgive that sin which I did shun
A year or two, but wallow'd in, a score?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

III.

I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
But swear by thy self, that at my death thy Son
Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore;
And, having done that, thou hast done;
I fear no more.

Tuesday Devotional Questions:

- How does Donne pun on his name? How does substituting your name in place of the word "done" in the poem affect your reading of the poem?
- How many different kinds of sin are mentioned?
- Is the doctrine of Original Sin mentioned?
- How do you relate to this poem? Are there areas or things in your life that you wish to confess?



Wednesday March 5, 2014

Holy Sonnet XVII

Since she whom I loved hath paid her last debt
To Nature, and to hers, and my good is dead,
And her soul early into heaven ravished,
Wholly on heavenly things my mind is set.
Here the admiring her my mind did whet
To seek thee God; so streams do show their head;
But though I have found thee, and thou my thirst
hast fed,
a holy thirsty dropsy melts me yet.
But why should I beg more Love, when as thou
Dost woo my soul for hers; offering all thine:
And dost not only fear lest I allow
My love to Saints and Angels things divine,
but in thy tender jealousy dost doubt
lest the world, flesh, yea, devil put thee out.

Wednesday Devotional Questions

- To what woman does the poem refer?
- What is this dropsy?
- Is anti-Roman Catholicism in the poem?
- How does this poem speak to your life spiritually?

Thursday March 6, 2014

Holy Sonnet XIX

Oh, to vex me, contraries meet in one:
Inconstancy unnaturally hath begott
A constant habit; that when I would not
I change in vowes, and in devotione.
As humorous is my contritione
As my prophane Love, and as soone forgott:
As ridlingly distemper'd, cold and hott,
As praying, as mute; as infinite, as none.
I durst not view heaven yesterday; and to day
In prayers, and flattering speaches I court God:
To morrow I quake with true feare of his rod.
So my devout fitts come and go away
Like a fantastique Ague: save that here
Those are my best dayes, when I shake with feare.

Thursday Devotional Questions

- How many kinds of opposites are in the poem?
- In what ways can you relate to these opposites in your relationship with God?
- How does the etymology of “profane” offer a key to the poem?

- How does the ancient theory of the “humors” function?
- How can this poem help you grow closer to God and deepen your understanding of prayer?

Friday March 7, 2014

Holy Sonnet XI

Spit in my face you Jewes, and pierce my side,
Buffet, and scoffe, scourge, and crucifie mee,
For I have sinn'd, and sinn'd, and onely hee,
Who could do no iniquitie, hath dyed:
But by my death can not be satisfied
My sinnes, which passe the Jewes impiety:
They kill'd once an inglorious man, but I
Crucifie him daily, being now glorified.
Oh let mee then, his strange love still admire:
Kings pardon, but he bore our punishment.
And Jacob came cloth'd in vile harsh attire
But to supplant, and with gainfull intent:
God cloth'd himsele in vile mans flesh, that so
Hee might be weake enough to suffer woe.

Friday Devotional Questions:

- Is the poem anti-Semitic?
- Why does the poet repeat the word “sinn'd”?
- What is “strange love”? and how does that impact your view of God’s love?
- What word or phrase do you find most significant or impactful to your spiritual life as you read this poem?



Saturday March 8, 2014

Good Friday, 1613. Riding Westward

Let mans Soule be a Spheare, and then, in this,
The intelligence that moves, devotion is
And as the other Spheares, by being growne
Subject to forraigne motions, lose their owne
And being by others hurried every day,
Scarce in a yeare their naturall forme obey:
Pleasure or businesse, so, our Soules admit
For their first mover, and are whirld by it.
Hence is's, that I am carryed towards the West
This day, when my Soules forme bends toward the
East.

There I should see a Sunne, by rising set,
And by that setting endlesse day beget;
But that Christ on this Crosse, did rise and fall,
Sinne had eternally benighted all.
Yet dare I'almost be glad, I do not see
That spectacle of too much weight for mee
Who sees Gods face, that is selfe life, must dye;
What a death were it then to see God dye?
It made his owne Lieutenant Nature shrinke,
It made his footstoole crack, and the Sunne winke.
Could I behold those hands which span the Poles,
And tune all spheares at once, peirc'd with those
holes?

Could I behold that endlesse height which is
Zenith to us, and our Antipodes,
Humbled below us? or that blood which is
The seat of all our Soules, if not of his,
Make curt of dust, or that flesh which was worne
By God, for his apparell, rag'd, and torne?
If on these things I durst not looke, durst I
Upon his miserable mother cast mine eye,
Who was Gods partner here, and furnish'd thus
Halfe of that Sacrifice, which ransom'd us?
Though these things, as I ride, be from mine eye,
They'are present yet unto my memory,
For that looks towards them; and thou look'st
towards mee,

O Saviour, as thou hang'st upon the tree;
I turne my backe to thee, but to receive
Corrections, till thy mercies bid thee leave.
O thinke mee worth thine anger, punish mee,
Burne off my rusts, and my deformity,
Restore thine Image, so much, by thy grace,
That thou may'st know mee, and I'll turne my
face.

Saturday Devotional Questions:

- How many questions are in the poem? Why?
- Does astrology function in the poem?
- Does the poet imply that we are all going westward?
- Are there words of confession in this poem that you connect with?
- What words or images impact you the most as you read this poem?

