

GLIMPSE

The Places

Fr. Larry Gillick, S.J.

There are places to which we must go; important offices, social encounters, even gyms. I know it is valuable for me to go running as often as my schedule allows. I enjoy the shower afterward, but not the getting up from my desk, walking slowly across campus and opening the locker door. I'd rather run from the running even though I know that during the shower and the walk back I will be grateful.

Going to the dentist's office is the same thing. The smell of every drillery takes me back to our family's dentist, whose name, believe it or not, was Adrian Meany. No kidding! We don't like much about the dentist's office except the inside of the door we are pushing to get out. We don't like what is good for us and can avoid those experiences and confrontations.

Our fleeing-place is so often the place of self-confrontation and yet that is so necessary for self-acceptance and selfless relationships. Very few of us like or look forward to honest confrontations. The usual results of these are so similar to walking out of the tooth-arranger's place. We are always better when truth meets truth. Settling things between persons, family-members, business partners, teammates, can be very uncomfortable, but when truth-truth encounters take place something fruitful occurs.

Relating with the Mysterious God in prayer follows a similar pattern. My praying-place and fleeing-place are often the same. When someone asks me how I am, I usually do not tell them the truth, because I haven't checked in very deeply about my condition. In praying, that is where we begin. What is the truth of me is where prayer begins. I might be quite aware of a spiritual cavity which I do not want the Divine Drill-Master to notice. When I do that, my prayer, centered in avoidance, becomes a pretense and unfruitful in my life. God's truthful love urges us to love our truth no matter what the decay might be.

It is not selfish or narcissistic to go to the dentist nor to the gym nor to a prayer-time. We begin by having a tooth ache which is not a selfish involvement. Our

meeting ourselves truthfully will always result in a more fruitful relational pattern. When Jesus, Truth, met persons who had met their truth, there resulted an intimacy which flourished into mission. Jesus did meet persons unavailable to their own reality, who were hiding from themselves and so from Him. There was not a real meeting, but a bumping into perhaps, a resisting. Jesus did not turn away from them, but they turned away, first from themselves and then from Jesus.

We have the little saying that *God meets us the way God finds us*. This is true, but *God graces us with our finding of ourselves first*. *God is the Finder, we are the found*. I do not know always how I am or what is true and that is the truth with which I often begin praying. Often I know a truth about myself that I do not like it one bit and I assume *God does not either*. *God is not ashamed of us or anything about us*. That's our truth. We will want to flee from our being met there, but *God is already at my fleeing-place, launching-pad*. *God urges us to remain in that position of flight-prep and allow ourselves to be met*. *God is not a Driller, but a loving Finder*. E. E. Comings ends his poem about four young girls picking up things as they walk along a seashore, "Whatever you lose, like a you or a me; it's always yourself you find in the sea." It is only a glimpse and now I wish I had a good excuse not to go running today.