

Reflection from the *'Little Book of Lent'* – an anthology composed by Reverend Canon Arthur Howells (2014, London: Harper Collins) comprising extracts from several of his favourite spiritual writers and reproduced here with his kind permission.

9. Thursday, Week Four

For Reflection

Michael Ramsey was the 100th Archbishop of Canterbury. Previously he was Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, Bishop of Durham and Archbishop of York. He wrote a number of books but was always at his happiest when giving spiritual teaching in his simple, but profound way.

Heaven

The words 'your life is hid with Christ in God' suggest that heaven is not only the goal towards which we journey but a treasure locked in our hearts and one day to be made visible in our eyes. (Colossians 3:1-2).

Here the Christian Eucharist speaks. In the Eucharist, with the Risen Jesus present as our food, we are worshipping with the saints and the angels in heaven. But the Risen Jesus who is the heart of the heavenly worship is also a Jesus who was crucified, and we share in heaven's worship only as sharing also in the Jesus who suffers in the world around us, reminding us to meet him there and to serve him in those who suffer. Indeed, in the Eucharist we are summoned by two voices, which are really one voice: 'Come, the heavenly banquet is here. Join with me and my mother and my friends in the heavenly supper.' 'Come, I am here in this world in those who suffer. Come to me, come with me, and serve me in them.'

In his work *The City of God* St Augustine told of heaven thus: 'We shall rest and we shall see, we shall see and we shall love, we shall love and we shall praise, in the end which is no end.'

Rest: we shall be freed from the busy and fussy activity in which we get in our own light and expose ourselves to our self-centredness. Resting, we shall find that we see in a new way, without the old hindrances. We shall **see** our neighbours as what they really are, creatures and children of God in whom is the divine image, and that image will become newly visible to us. We shall see ourselves too as God's infinitesimally small creatures: and we shall begin to see God himself in his beauty. Seeing, we shall **love**, for how shall we not love God in his beauty and how shall we not love all our neighbours in whom the image of God is now visible to us? **Praise** will be the last word, for all is of God and none is of our own achievement, and we shall know the depth of gratitude and adoration. St Augustine adds 'in the end which is no end'. It will be the end, for here is perfection and nothing can be more final. It will be no end, for within the resting, seeing, loving and praising there is an inexhaustible adventure of new and ceaseless discovery. Such is the heaven for which we were created.

Resting, seeing, loving and praising: these words describe not only the goal of heaven but the message of Christianity in the world. The world has lost the way of resting, seeing, loving, praising. Swept along in ceaseless activity the world does not pause to consider. With no resting and no considering the power to see is lost: to see where we are going, to see the larger perspectives, to see beyond the group or the nation or the race, to see human beings as they really are with the image of God in them. Where seeing is dim, love becomes faint; and praise is lost for we praise only when first we have seen and loved. Man loses the praise of his creator which is the end of his existence and the source of his resting, seeing and loving.

BE STILL AND KNOW
MICHAEL RAMSEY

Scripture Reading
Colossians 3:1-4

'Your life is hidden with Christ in God.'

Prayer

Lord, you have made us for yourself –

Our hearts are restless
until they find rest in you.
Help us to see with your eyes
that seeing we may love
and loving we may serve
and know the peace of heaven
where we shall see you face to face.