WATCHING AND WAITING
WRITTEN BY PATRICIA TREWERN

As a young girl, I loved to spend time with my grandmother. She was a humble woman of few words. She was also a wonderful cook, gardener and seamstress and she loved to crochet. My favorite was the bread she made. One day I asked her to teach me how to make the delicious butter rolls she would often serve. While teaching me her secrets for the mouthwatering recipe, she simply named each ingredient as she put it in the bowl. I noticed that some items were stirred, some were sifted, some were beaten and the yeast was mixed with warm water. But her words were: “flour, eggs, margarine, sugar, salt, water, yeast.” I had to pay close attention to see how much of each ingredient she added and what she was doing with it. Then, as she began to knead the bread, she said, “Watch my hands.” I watched her hands closely as she folded, patted and pushed the bread with her palms. Then she called me over and put my hands underneath hers to show me the correct technique to knead the bread. After a few times she had me continue on my own. We then covered the bread for the waiting period so it could rise. After several hours, we punched the bread down and shaped it into rolls, covering it again for another time of waiting for the rolls to rise.

During the waiting phases, we would just sit in the rocking chairs and watch the birds, or we would walk out into the garden in order to check the vegetables. There was not much conversation going on, but I felt so close to her.

It was quite a long process and my grandmother used very few words to explain the recipe and her way of doing it. I had to watch her hands, watch her face and watch her eyes to grasp all that she was teaching me. But I felt she was extremely present with me. I could see that she was watching me watch her. And she knew I was learning what she wanted me to know.

We baked the rolls with that smell of fresh bread wafting through the entire house. That night at dinner, we had a big grin for each other as we had the first taste of our afternoon labors. When my grandfather complimented my grandmother on the delicious taste, she said with an even bigger grin, “Trish made these.”

Today I think Christ speaks to us in very much the same way that my grandmother did. We listen constantly for his words. But much of the time he is wanting us to watch his hands, to focus on his ways and to keep our eyes on his. It’s not that he is not answering our request or desire to hear from him. He is just so extremely present with us that words are not always the best way of communicating his message to us.

So while we must take time to listen to our Lord, we must also watch and wait — but with him! Let’s not be in such a hurry to get away and get the other items on our list taken care of. Sit in a rocking chair or take a walk in the garden. Listen while you watch and wait. Intimacy with Christ comes during these most special times of being with him. Not always talking but listening with our ears, our heart, and our eyes. Listening with all of our senses while we watch and wait. What a joyous and refreshing time to spend this type of time with our Lord!

Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.
— Hebrews 12:2 NIV

God never hurries. There are no deadlines against which he must work. Only to know this is to quiet our spirits and relax our nerves.
— A.W. Tozer, The Pursuit of God
IN THE GARDEN
A HYMN BY AUSTIN MILES (d. 1913)

I come to the garden alone
while the dew is still on the roses,
and the voice I hear falling on my ear,
the Son of God discloses.

Refrain:
And he walks with me, and he talks with me,
and he tells me I am his own;
and the joy we share as we tarry there,
none other has ever known.

He speaks, and the sound of his voice
is so sweet the birds hush their singing,
and the melody that he gave to me
within my heart is ringing.

I’d stay in the garden with him
though the night around me be falling,
but he bids me go; thru the voice of woe
his voice to me is calling.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

• Try choosing a different place to have your time with God. Watch the surroundings with questioning and a spirit of expectation.

• Take a few minutes to close your eyes as you sit in God’s presence. Then, as you open your eyes, notice everything around you. Is God speaking to you through any of your surroundings?

• When something unusual or different happens in your day, take time to write down any thoughts God might be sharing with you through that experience. Then, looking back through your writings, notice any repeated thoughts or recurring themes.

• Do you watch for God in the mundane activities of everyday life? In what ways does God interject himself into your daily activities that is sometimes surprising?

• When you want to hear from God, how do you prepare yourself to receive his answer? Do you always go to the same place to have communion with God?

• Think of specific instances when you knew God was speaking to your spirit. How did you hear him? Which senses did he use to communicate to you?

• How do you sense the presence of the Holy Spirit?

A Prayer of Illumination

Teach me to listen, Holy Spirit, for your voice — in busyness and in boredom, in certainty and doubt, in noise and in silence. Teach me, Lord, to listen. Amen.

— John Veltri, S.J.

SUGGESTED SPIRITUAL FORMATION RESOURCES

The Pursuit of God: The Human Thirst for the Divine, by A.W. Tozer
When God Shows Up: How to Recognize the Unexpected Appearances of God in Your Life, by R.T. Kendall
With: Reimagining the Way You Relate to God, by Skye Jethani

Additional spiritual formation resources are available online at www.spiritualformationstore.com.