

Blessed are the restless



Yesterday being the Feast of St Augustine, some of his best-known words appeared several times in my social media feeds. And of course, this included You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.

And I have known the truth of that statement. In my mid-twenties and far from God I experienced a deep restlessness, a search for "more", without knowing this "more" was in fact God. The quest, at times urgent, driven, insistent, eventually brought me into God's Heart; and in here there was deep peace, rest and quietude. This, after all, was the seeking Pope Francis spoke of a few years ago, as the courage of a restless heart: the search for God means having the courage to set out on a risky path, it means following our restless hearts... You need a certain restlessness to set out on this path, the same restlessness that God placed in each of our hearts and that brings us forward in search of him.

In that finding there was quietude, oh yes, and yet... in a way, the restlessness doesn't end here; it cannot. Finding God, coming to dwell in God, is merely the end of one, initial quest and the beginning of another, deeper, still quietly insistent one. As Augustine wrote elsewhere in his Confessions: I have tasted you; now I hunger and thirst for more. Our initial, aching, longing, restless hunger has been satisfied, only to be replaced by a new one.

Thinking of this, I remembered a sister I lived with for several years, who died last year. She was an incredibly restless woman: not because she hadn't found God, but because she had - and the God she had found filled her with passion and zeal and the unending desire to give more; to be more, to do more. She didn't have a comfort zone, because that would have implied being comfortable, and this she could never be, not in a world filled with pain and injustice. This was also the restless passion which drove St Philippine Duchesne (who, I've just been reminded, was born on this day 248 years ago), and so many others, throughout the centuries, in living the truth once expressed by Edith Stein: The deeper one is drawn into God, the more one must "go out of oneself"; that is, one must go out to the world in order to carry the divine life into it.

So yes, once found, our hearts will rest in God; and there is beatitude in this, and fulfillment and deep, peaceful joy. But they also should not rest: they should continue to search, continue to hunger, continue to want to give and to be more, for God and the world; and in this there is an even greater blessedness, and, unfathomably, an even deeper fulfillment.

Blessed are the restless, because this is what will lead them into the deepest depths of God, in and for the world.

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