



Coalesce Podcast

Episode 035 – Bearing Witness

Note, terms, scripture, practice



St. Vincent of Lerin (434): “Now in the Catholic Church itself we take the greatest care to hold *that which has been believed everywhere, always and by all*. That is truly and properly ‘catholic,’ as is shown by the very force and meaning of the word, which comprehends everything almost universally.”

If it is true, then it has to be true everywhere and all the time, or it is not true!

A true religion is precisely one that can teach you how to recognize and honor God everywhere, and not just inside your own group symbols.

We don’t think ourselves into a new way of living; we live ourselves into a new way of thinking.

[Genesis 12:1-2](#)

Thomas Merton: “People may spend their whole lives climbing the ladder of success only to find, once they reach the top, that the ladder is leaning against the wrong wall.”

Francis of Assisi: “You only know as much as you *do*.”

[2 Corinthians 12:10](#)

[Acts 2:44-45](#)

Practice: Experiencing the Other

We can theorize all day long about theology, politics, and social change. But the rubber meets the road in practice, in actual encounter with real life. Even so, too often our lives are small and circumscribed, structured to protect us from anything uncomfortable or unfamiliar. Perhaps you can try something new, get out of your comfort zone, or open yourself to experience the “other.”

Here are a few ideas to consider exploring:

- Change your usual routine by shopping in a different grocery store, taking a different route home, visiting another church, walking in a new park.
- Volunteer somewhere you frequent or somewhere you’ve never been—a library, food bank, animal shelter, thrift store.
- Try a new physical activity such as tai chi, juggling, skateboarding, or even walking backward.
- Ask a stranger you meet—while waiting in line, at a stoplight—to share their story, to talk about what matters most to them, to name their deepest needs and desires. Really listen. Then share what you learned with someone you know.

A consistent contemplative practice can help you stay open and receptive during “adventures” into the unfamiliar as well as during periods of ordinariness. If you find yourself afraid, stressed, or defensive, perhaps use the Welcoming Prayer as a way to be present to your feelings, to observe without becoming attached. Open your heart and mind to find God—the Other—in the new person or situation and in your own compassionate response to the moment.