

It was the sight of a tree that stopped Nicholas Herman in his tracks; a tree, bare of leaves, its branches black in the encroaching darkness of a winter's afternoon. He had been walking out in the countryside, a former soldier, lamed from his wounds, relegated to serving as a footman in a grand house and conscious only of his failings. Depressed, miserable, carrying a burden of clumsiness and worthlessness, he stood looking at the tree – a symbol of the winter felt in his soul.

Suddenly as he looked, he remembered, remembered the tree in full and verdant leaf and knew that it would again grow green in the warmth of the spring sunshine. At that moment he recognised that in this symbol of the seasons was an expression of the love of God, that God in His love provided for all his creation. With the realisation came the sense of God's loving presence filling him with awe and love.

It was a turning point. Nicholas Herman had thought was that he was a great awkward fellow who broke everything. But his experience taught him otherwise. He became a monk and discovered nothing but happiness in serving God and his brothers, bringing to his new life an uncomplicated and honest heart full of love for God and for people. And from this now untroubled soul arose a gentle theology that taught the practice of living in the presence of God. For Brother Lawrence, as he became, believed that God is with us wherever we are and whatever we are doing – as close to us at work as at prayer. As he put it, "the shortest way to go straight to God is by a continual exercise of love and doing all things for His sake."

"Accustom yourself, then, by degrees thus to worship Him, to beg His grace, to offer Him your heart from time to time in the midst of your business, even every moment if you can. Do not always scrupulously confine yourself to certain rules or particular forms of devotion, but act with a general confidence in God, with love and humility...He is always near you and with you; leave Him not alone"

Prayer of Brother Lawrence

"Lord, make me according to thy heart"