

The Rt Rev. Wheeler - Bishop Emeritus of Leeds  
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Miles down the Rhône valley, but in France, there is the Grande Chartreuse, the mother house of all the Carthusian monasteries in the world. And there, and elsewhere, I have met those very, very dedicated men who give their life praying for the rest of us. One of these became a great friend of mine and I asked him how he had become to be a Carthusian monk. I can't tell you the whole story now but he had some sort of an experience in which he saw a naked cross and he heard a voice saying to him. "Will you nail yourself to this cross for me?" And he said, "Oh, hell! Oh God! But if it is Your Will, Yes" And he became one of the loveliest people I have ever met in my life, Radiantly happy, a real deep man of God. And I said to him, "Did you find that when you had once made that commitment, that everything was finished and it was a lovely story ever afterwards?" He smiled and he said, "No. I have to nail myself to that cross anew every day."

I think that it a very important thing about all commitment~~s~~. It is something that has got to be an ongoing event in which we examine ourselves, not too introspectively, but see whether we are following the sign that we have seen in the pilgrimage of life and where is it leading us. We are all on a pilgrimage. We're all on the way to God, our Father. We're only here for a short time. Are we going to get there. He who perseveres to the end will be saved.

I have just had a very lovely experience here in Caux which is my first visit this week. I hope it isn't my last one, though I'm getting pretty ancient. I have been tremendously enriched by the experience of the people I have met and the things that I have heard and the great and deep commitment that I have seen. That I know that for all of you who have such a commitment, it needs this constant renewal. And this is particularly so in our relationship with God our Father.

I was speaking to you about that naked cross and I think of the two-fold thing that we are all bound to do - to go to God and then, the other branch of the Cross, to find Him in all those whom He has created.

I know that all of you are people who pray and who don't just ask lots of things but listen to Him. I know too that you know this enrichment of the value of silence. And this to me has always been a very important and vital element in the spiritual life. This is your powerhouse of strength, your daily communication with God which is going to make possible your witness to Him through the rest of the day. Fidelity to that above all else and then finding Him in others.

I remember Cardinal Hume saying to me once, You know, I believe, that every person I meet can tell me something more about God. And he didn't just

mean Christians, he meant all people because all people are God's creations and are made in His image. If we look deep enough, there is always something we can find in every one. It is jolly hard to find it sometimes but it is there because he is made in the image of God. That is why there is this very great emphasis, and rightly, on our service. We came to serve and not to be served. God calls us in that way. We are to go out to those whom He has made and whom He has redeemed and whom He has loved and we are to bear witness. Indeed we can find enrichment in the relationship with them and they bear witness to us.

This is a wonderful thought. The vocation of all people is something that belongs to every one of us. We are our brother's and our sister's keepers and we have great responsibilities and that is why it was also a tremendous encouragement and enrichment to me to listen to some of those debates and talks which have been going on that show how vitally important it is for people who have turned to God to bring the message of God and the law of God and to enable others to keep it. And to help and strengthen them to do so.

I was once making a series of those early morning talks for the radio and I was being introduced by a very masterful sort of woman. She rang me up after the first morning and she said, "I noticed from your scripts that the one this morning was one sentence too long. Now, I think that you should cut out in tomorrow's talk that line on the ten commandments." I was very angry with her and I said, "Oh, please let me decide about this. Let me keep the ten commandments." And she said, "Monseigneur, I assure you, there is nothing I would do <sup>to</sup> ~~do~~ deter you." So I was allowed to do it.

But all the same, we all need to have these principles, the ten commandments, the four absolutes, <sup>which</sup> ~~sum~~ it all up in a sense and to show a selflessness and, above all, a great love for God. I can remember that Cardinal of ours in England saying to me also on another occasion. "I believe that when we die, or very soon after the moment of death, we will find ourselves surrounded by the most ecstatic love we have ever known in this life - the love on earth, the love of marriage - all those things are beautiful in God's creation, all those things are holy but they are nothing compared with the love of God that is going to embrace us all, and in which we must set our hearts and try to communicate to others. The ecstatic love of God.

All these things should help us to urge us on to an ever deeper commitment. I can remember, and probably some of my contemporaries from 50 and 60 years ago whom I have met here and some of them for the first time. We remember an occasion on which the Late Archbishop Temple came to preach in St. Mary the Virgin in Oxford and give a sort of retreat or mission. You know how very heartily undergraduates join in singing hymns. They sang that hymn - When I survey the

wonderous Cross, On which the Prince of Glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss  
And pour contempt on all my pride.

And when they got to a certain verse, he stopped them. I think it was getting a bit too much for him. He said, "I don't want you to sing the next verse unless you really sing it with all your heart and not with all your guts. As you can imagine, it began in a very low way. But the words were:-

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small,  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.