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God of My Daily Routine: Toward a Spirituality of the World



*What does it take to develop a spirituality of the world?
And why does it matter so much that we should do it?*

Spiritualities arise out of historical predicaments, out of circumstances and situations. Writers, even gospel writers, do not create them *de novo*. God is present in and with a given community. Writers, speakers, leaders, and listeners describe and give voice to that common experience of the faithful. Yet each one may shape that spirituality according to his or her own angle of vision.

More and more we are conscious that we need God in the middle of things, even in the middle of this constantly accelerating and technologically driven society that seems to carry us far from the simple and biblical roots of our faith.

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We are in the process of developing a spirituality of the world.

Let us consider the spirit of God at work in our lives. Let us speak from within the community and for the sake of the community, not from some place of isolation, but rather in the thick of things.

We know that we belong to a long history, that we have an enormous heritage, a variety of spiritualities within Catholicism, generally named in terms of religious communities: Benedictine, Dominican, Franciscan, Carmelite, Cistercian, Jesuit, and many more. Moreover, if we look carefully, we see how each community arose for the purpose of addressing some immediate need in society or within the body of Christ, offering an interpretation of the past for the sake of the future.

So it is that we who are lay people in the twenty-first century find ourselves charged with a new task, to discover a spirituality large enough and penetrating enough for the lives we live and the enterprises in which we are engaged; and to do this we have to adapt our tradition, even reinvent it, to discover what God is saying to us in the present moment and for the sake of the future.

This “new” spirituality I speak of is novel because we are encouraged to know God in the middle of different circumstances. A host of technologies separates us from the experience of our ancestors and this divide is such that we can barely conceive what it was to live in a world before penicillin, before aviation, before the telephone. Many new social structures are also changing the way spirituality is lived.

Yet I do not need to persuade you about the importance of this, because you are already practicing a spirituality of the world. What you are doing is reconciling, somehow, the God of your daily experience, the God whom you meet in the clash of personalities and in the relentless push of schedules and deadlines, and in the unforgiving nature of the clock and the calendar, with the God whose nature was first revealed to you in childhood, the God you met perhaps in the woods, or at the seashore, or in the sunlight streaming through

stained glass, or in the Eucharist, or in the rosary, or in your grandmother's prayer or in your parents' love.

In short, you are engaged in a process—some would call it a journey—in which you come to know God more deeply as you come to know God acting within your daily realities: that is, within the world of work, within the tensions and joys of personal relationships, within family life, within friendship, and within the collaborative business of personal and collective aspiration. And one of the ways we do this is by reflection.



What does it take to recognize the spirit of God at work in the world?

From my first office in New York City, on the thirty-seventh floor of a Fifth Avenue tower, I could look down on St. Patrick's Cathedral. It looked like a child's plaything, a toy cathedral I could lift and carry somewhere. Something about this troubled me. Cathedrals, I felt, should be looked up to. Later, when I visited England, I saw how cathedrals can dominate landscapes. Then I understood the new power balance of twentieth-century life. Lever House and the Seagram's Building, I concluded, are our new cathedrals. The Chrysler Building and the Empire State are our statements of value. Dwarfing the little churches on Park Avenue and Wall Street, they have created a new ethos. These buildings are proclamations of power.

We know that power corrupts. We do well to be wary of exalting power as power. Yet in candor we should also confess that these giants of the metropolis bear witness to our dreams. The naive beauty of these sleek, upward-soaring towers is meant to lift us up. From their new heights and vantage points we can see whole valleys and rivers stretching before us, opportunities at our feet. In these and other dazzling ways, cities embody a vision. They are fueled by our energies, drives that are clues to God's creative power working in us.

The presence of God in daily affairs was known to the ancient Hebrews as *Shekinah*, an intense, fiery perception of holiness seen not with the naked eye but with the inner eye. Closer to our own times, new mystics, persons of learning and prayer, have seen God's presence in the world. The poet Gerard Manley Hopkins tells us that the world is charged with the grandeur of God. "It will flame out, like shining from shook foil." Another mystic, the philosopher-scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, speaks to us of (jarring phrase!) "holy matter." From clues like these we take courage.

Even so we are afflicted with a terrible double-mindedness that thinks some things are pure and others impure. These things are matters of faith; those are matters for the world. We are trapped in a habit of mind that conceives of business as unholy. This unholiness in the marketplace, it seems, is a prophecy that generally comes true. How can we heal this division in our lives, this gap in our understanding?

My own sense is that we fail to include God not deliberately but through neglect. What will it take to convince us that God is already here? That our God is one who enters into our human condition without reserve? Even though this is the consistent teaching of Christianity, that God is with us, near to us, it somehow eludes the modern imagination.

We have not been accustomed to think this way, to imagine God present in our daily struggles. But something more important is at stake. We need to know not only that God is in charge, and God is powerful, but also that God is the one who initiates the transformation of the world. It is a work of grace, it is a work of power. And we are here not so much to be in charge as to be instruments of God's purposes, to surrender our gifts and our skills into God's capable hands.

It is because we need to see this, to see God as sovereign in all our daily affairs, that I would urge you to believe in the practical value of contemplation. We need to practice—when and how we can—

contemplation in action. This is contemplation that does not run away from things, contemplation that will raise us to a new level of seeing.



To know God in the middle of things, we must become contemplatives.

In her book, *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt tells us about the critical shift of focus that took place in our society some three centuries ago. She speaks of the loss of contemplation. She says that there was a radical change in Western thought, which reversed and reshuffled the order of things. This change was more radical than a simple reversal of the established traditional balance between contemplation and action. No, she says: the balance that was struck at that time was between thought and action, between thinking and doing, and contemplation, in the sense of beholding the truth, was entirely eliminated.¹

Perhaps it would be better to say that contemplation was marginalized. But it has survived. In that radical overturning of the past that we call the nineteen sixties, contemplation, still fresh and alive behind her monastery walls, came back to us. And writers and thinkers, Thomas Merton was certainly one, encouraged us to believe that we as faithful believers could become contemplatives.

Merton teaches us, William Shannon suggests, that the lay vocation is not second-rate. Every Christian is called to contemplation. Furthermore, the call to contemplation is also a call to action and responsible moral choice. Can Merton legitimately be credited for this important groundshift in Catholic spirituality? I wondered if Shannon was overdoing it, but had to admit that Merton had made a difference to me. Quiet time, solitude, and separateness are vital to such a spirituality, Shannon tells us. Even so, spirituality must be lived in the midst of things. Shannon also says a heightened consciousness is emerging that links us to others across the globe. God

is inviting us into *shalom* in a way that may not have been possible for past generations.²

This idea, of course, has taken hold, very deeply, with many of us, so that contemplative life is now being adapted to the situation of the laity, no longer restricted to the hermitage in the desert or the hut in the wilderness. And I would suggest to you that contemplation is needed, it is a corrective, of sorts, for our relentless mentality of action and achievement. We remember, as Arendt says, that contemplation is a way of beholding the truth. And it is truth that we need most in order to be effective in our human endeavors.



To be rooted in God is key to our effectiveness.

THE "CASH VALUE" OF A BELIEF (WILLIAM JAMES).

The American philosopher William James was fond of the expression "cash value." In his essay, "Pragmatism's Conception of Truth," he framed the issue of belief: "Grant an idea or belief to be true, what difference will its being true make in anyone's actual life? How will the truth be realized? . . . What, in short, is the truth's cash-value in experiential terms?" Administrators and entrepreneurs measure truth by results. In fact, the gospels measure it the same way. But the gospels tell us we will not earn salvation by our activities. To try to earn salvation is delusionary. Instead, our task is to accept wholeness as a gift, and at the same time to accept the reality of things, that God is ruler over the whole enterprise of human effort. This truth, when grasped and assimilated, transforms us. James says further: "Truth happens to an idea. It becomes true, it is made true by events. . . ."³ The conclusion we may reach is that as we live God's word it becomes true for ourselves and for others: truth happens to us. By a process of action and reflection we begin to live in harmony with truth.

THE PRACTICAL EFFECTS OF CONTEMPLATION (GERALD MAY).

What does contemplation have to do with the practical business of living? Isn't it really a matter of turning our back on the world, of retreating from the struggle? No.

These are the characteristics that Gerald May has identified for experienced contemplatives:

1. Increased clarity and breadth of awareness. Instead of the usual shifting of focused attention back and forth among different tasks, the experienced contemplative develops a capacity for more panoramic, all-inclusive awareness.
2. More direct and incisive responsiveness to situations. Since more perceptions are available on a moment-by-moment basis, the contemplative tends to be more present-centered and capable of responding to the unexpected.
3. Greater self-knowledge. As this is gained, one becomes less vulnerable to a variety of existential anxieties.

These characteristics that Gerald May mentions are all concerned with a greater freedom and maturity.⁴ To May's three effects, I would add:

4. When we become people of prayer, habitual contemplatives, we also experience a greater compassion.

This way of living, which is rooted in God, gives us a sense of direction and a high level of commitment. We know our work is not in vain because Yahweh is building the house. "In Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28 κJV). "If Yahweh does not build the house, in vain do the masons toil" (Ps. 127:1).

GHANDI'S IDEA: AN EXPERIMENT IN TRUTH.

John Loudon, in an essay called "Experiments in Truth," celebrates Gandhi's notion of testing an idea by living it. "Ultimately," Loudon says, "the only validity religious ideas and symbols have is the degree

to which they make a difference in our lives. What other reality could they have? . . . The test is in the living”⁵ Gandhi’s idea is to “try living as if the teaching is true, and see what sort of person you become, what quality your life takes on.” In short, codes like the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes are meant to guide us toward freedom . . . in “discovering how excellence and fulfillment come only in freedom from the drives of selfishness.”

So we have a number of authorities converging to tell us we can live by truth, we can be shaped by truth, we can see the effects of a deeper connectedness to God.

DAILY ROUTINE IS THE CRUCIBLE.

When I was reflecting on what I would say about the spirit of God in our world of work, I came across a very moving prayer by Karl Rahner, which is called “God of My Daily Routine.” That is just it, I thought. We can conceive of a God who is far off, at a great distance and a great height, but what we need most is a God of our daily routine. And this prayer of Rahner’s is mostly a lament for the way that his life is choked by a thousand tasks, hemmed in by a thousand responsibilities. He needs God but he is saddened by his inability to reach the Almighty in the midst of his day-to-day struggle. Now, mind you, Karl Rahner is a man of major accomplishments, considered a key figure in modern Catholic thought, the author of fourteen volumes of theological investigations, and yet when he prays to God, he says: “My soul has become a huge warehouse where day after day the trucks unload their crates without any plan or discrimination, to be piled helter skelter in every available corner and cranny, until it is crammed full from top to bottom with the trite, the commonplace, the insignificant, the routine.” Rahner finds himself overwhelmed by “empty talk and pointless activity, idle curiosity and pretensions of importance that . . . roll forward in a never-ending stream.”

But he reflects on this predicament. And he remembers the power and purpose of God, and he begins to see further: “I now see

clearly that, if there is any path at all on which I can approach you, it must lead through the middle of my ordinary daily life. . . . I must learn to have both every day and Your Day in the same exercise. In devoting myself to the works of this world, I must learn to give myself to You, to possess You, the one and only thing, in everything . . . in You, all that has been scattered is re-united; in Your Love all the diffusion of the day's chores comes home again to the evening of Your unity."⁶

So, with Rahner, I submit to you that it is in the middle of everything where the Spirit of God must come to liberate and strengthen us. Daily life, daily work is the battleground, the crucible. Briefly, I would offer these spheres in which we must continually seek God and discover the saving power of God: time, decision-making, contribution, and world-transformation.

Time. In many of our dealings we feel and act as though we were victimized by time. "Time is not on our side here," we may hear ourselves saying. "Time is working against us." A deeper spirituality of the world calls for appreciating the sacredness of time. Shortage of time is one of the worst pressure points in our lives. We look for ways to "manage" time. But as our spirituality grows, we sense that time is not a problem to be solved. Instead, we come to treasure time. We think less of using it and more of appreciating it, knowing its right value. Or as the psalmist says, in the "Teach us to count how few days we have and so gain wisdom of heart" (Ps. 90:12-13). But we can't exactly think our way into this. To accept God as the guardian of time is more like a yielding, a surrender to a simpler style of believing.

On the front page of the *New York Times*, we may often read a reminder to devout Jewish women to light Sabbath candles eighteen minutes before sunset. The exact hour of sunset is published, together with an 800 number for those living outside the city. The announcement is common enough on Fridays in New York, signal-

ing the careful Sabbath observance of many metropolitan Jews. This small announcement alerts us to a universe of meaning: the mystery of space and time.

This same Sabbath-mystery, this peace, is honored by Christians as the Lord's Day, a day of resurrection, a sacred surprise. Both in Jewish and Christian tradition, the meaning of the Sabbath has to do with the story of creation and the interconnection of work and rest. In the seventh day's quiet a balance is struck, evening out the six days of pressure and pursuit. And the sovereignty of God is proclaimed by our actions as well as our words.

Through each of the Sabbath's concrete moments, children chasing each other around the sofas, babies clamoring for attention, in the visiting, in the laughter, in the news-telling, in the exchange of family visits, in the table fellowship, in all these definite moments we see God. Sabbath itself is a mystical encounter. It teaches us to tell time.

The observance of a day of quiet and rest is God's shalom, a celebration of peace and holiness in the midst of turmoil and trial. The world is at war; injustice and violence are everywhere. How can we celebrate peace, when there is no peace? The peace we honor is the peace the world cannot give. Yet God gives it, and we know it, when we pause for a moment. . . . The earth turns again. Now it is no longer Saturday or Sunday but Monday. Monday is rarely anyone's favorite day. C. S. Lewis said, "The cross comes before the crown, and tomorrow is a Monday morning." Yet in the order of the weekdays there is another kind of blessing. We know each day as gift when we surrender our need for mastery and control.

In a high-stress agenda, often the days flow together in a mindless stream. It is good to lean against this. Stay in touch with the earth's turning and be conscious of the uniqueness of each day. Get up before dawn and watch the light slowly increasing, or deliberately stay in touch with twilight. Morning and evening prayer are good disciplines here. Follow the example of Thomas More, an important

man in the government of Henry VIII. Consider leaving one day each week entirely free for God.

Everything seems to come right when the calendar befriends us, and we remember to cherish time.

Decision-making. C. S. Lewis has this to say about the transforming power of choices: “Every time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you, the part of you that chooses, into something a little different from what it was before. And taking your life as a whole, with all your innumerable choices, all your life long you are slowly turning this central thing . . . either into a creature that is in harmony with God, and with other creatures, and with itself, or else into one that is in a state of war. . . . Each of us at each moment is progressing to the one state or the other.”⁷

The word “decision-making” is very commonplace, so we hardly notice it. And the word “saintliness” is so antique that we hardly use it. But nothing is more important in our twenty-first-century lives than real holiness at work in human affairs.

A Jesuit thinker, John Langan, has some comments on this in his essay, “Saints and Managers: The Challenge and Virtues of the Christian Business Leader.”⁸ Langan argues (from his own observations) that “a number of people in corporate America have feelings like Dante in the ‘dark wood.’ They are troubled by the prospect of a world in which moral boundary markers are trampled in the rush to success and by the ways in which, in order to accomplish their goals, they can become strangers to themselves. . . . They are made uncomfortable both by the person they perceive as a pure pragmatist without moral roots and by the person they see as the incarnation of inflexible moral principle. This is a position I find regularly voiced by reflective practitioners in larger organizations; and I would argue that it should be taken quite seriously.”

Langan has really grasped the way some people of faith may feel within organizations: their times of darkness, their discomfort with

“virtue language,” their longing for the good. Langan lays out a vision of moral leadership that has nothing to do with keeping up appearances and everything to do with practice. He goes on:

We are understandably reluctant to speak of business leaders as saints, even while we believe that they, like all Christians, are called to be saints, we may well feel something similar about moral leadership . . . moral leadership is not an executive perk or a stable possession . . . like other human virtues, it has to be earned or acquired and exercised or maintained. It is something to which people are called, which they have to reach out toward, much as Paul reached out to the gift of salvation: “Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead. I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13-14).

Since Langan first wrote this, the slope has become even worse. Yet to me he sounds prophetic when he says:

American society cannot survive with an understanding of itself as a moral community if it gives over its marketplaces and workplaces to amoral ways of thinking and morally questionable practices. In the continuing human struggle with the powers of evil in the hearts of individuals and the cores of institutions, we [must look for and work toward] a coherent and credible moral climate. We do not expect to terminate this conflict, to win this struggle in our lifetimes; as Christians we think of it as our share in the struggle of Christ himself with the powers of evil, the powers and principalities of this world (Col. 2:15).⁹

Contribution. I encourage you to use the power of reflection on the work of your organizations, and to call to mind the dream: the corporate dream, what the work is for, what it is about, and how your own dream connects with that.

I remember a conversation I had once with Dr. Gary Costley of the Kellogg Company,¹⁰ a man who really believed in the company's dream. And when he would come back from a difficult meeting in Washington, where it seemed that nobody understood his company, he would go into the plant and be restored by watching the cornflakes coming off the assembly line. For him, the cornflakes were a return to simplicity, to the vision of the founders.

Some of the greatest difficulties that arise in organizations come about when the creative contribution of an individual or a group is blunted by the system, by the deafness or inflexibility of the organization. Yet, when we look at the stories of the greatest contributors to the social good, to the work of creative artists and leaders, we often see how an individual blighted by misunderstandings is able to contribute in a novel way. On the practical level, how can we open ourselves to this kind of saintliness, a moral framework that is uncomfortable with "holiness-talk" but continues to yearn for the good? A vision that is conscious of our own inadequacy and sin? One way, I think, is to study a good life close to ours in time. Any close acquaintance with Merton will show him, warts and all. While Dorothy Day has already been put on a pedestal, she is very candid about her failings. Vividly retelling her own story, she invites us to a kind of holiness not confined to the Lower East Side. A second way (especially effective in troubled organizations) is to enter into the collective story: who we are, where we came from, how things came to be this way. Somehow, out of all the angst and complaining, a vision of the good will emerge. We remember the original call we felt to the work we do. Still a third way is to open ourselves to a long-cherished ideal, one that, in the conflicts of the workplace, has long ago been set aside. For me, it has often been necessary to go on pilgrimage to a place, like lower Manhattan, that embodies a host of entangled values; in a word, a social consciousness.

"In order to have a Christian social order we must first have Christians," Dorothy Day wrote. In cofounding the Catholic Work-

er Movement she wanted, like Francis of Assisi, to call the whole people of God to renewal and reform, to renew the church with the Gospel. While most people remember Day for her vigorous social protest, hers was no splinter-group advocacy. She wanted Catholicism whole and entire, its devotions, its depth of prayer and spirituality, its love of the world, its celebration of creative and created things. But most of all she felt, and said in *The Catholic Worker*: "It is time to take the lid off the well of truth from which the mystics and saints drew".¹¹

World-transformation. At the beginning of this essay I tried to assure you that you are not in charge of world-transformation, that rather God here is taking the initiative. Is there any way that we can be reassured, in spite of everything, that such a transformation is actually taking place? I think we should look to the smallest kinds of change.

You may of course be called to establish the next Microsoft, or the next Greenpeace, or the successor to the Internet, or the cure for AIDS or cancer and far be it from me to discourage you. But my vision of the thing is that grace works quietly, like grass growing, and amazing things will result.

One of the most important ways our effectiveness grows is in groups. Recently I have been involved in a group that came together to reflect on the Gospels. There's an interesting mix of occupations and professions, a rare blend of generations, too. And our faith commitment has seemed to point us outward: toward the city, the political order, questions of how to live. The method is simple. We meet every other week, early in the morning. By mutual agreement we've read some part of scripture. Doggedly we've moved through Mark, Matthew, Luke, Acts. We've used commentaries to try to "get at" the meaning more readily, or to help reconstruct the scene in our imaginations.

What often happens is that when I least expect it, Jesus is present. In a recent session (following Andrew Overman's *Church and Com-*

munity in Crisis) we imagined Jesus calling the fishermen to drop their nets. Then we imagined them heading around Galilee, hanging out in synagogues (gathering places). Overman helped us to imagine what it might feel like to follow Jesus: "Given the relatively small size of Lower Galilee . . . A . . . likely scenario is the group gathered around Jesus, being out on the road for a day or two, and then returning to their homes and town. . . . One could easily travel with Jesus for several days, or even one day, get to a Galilean town, engage in an argument with local leaders, and be home by nightfall."¹² Suddenly the whole Gospel situation made sense to us. It was not so very different from our situation. We were also gathering, hanging out, wanting to be friends with Jesus, wanting to learn from him.

One thing I've noticed is the way the insight blooms. At first there are pockets of silence. People feel stuck. Then a major connection is made. The infancy narratives lead us into a discussion of the ways power is exercised in society. We make connections between the leadership of Moses and Jesus. Everything comes alive.

A recent discussion was about the way power is exercised, not through the legal system, but outside of it, through individual power brokers who influence the way things get done. The pressures bearing down on the community of Matthew seem to be our pressures too. We wrestle with the beatitudes, trying to make them ours.

Leadership is formed this way. When we forget what leadership really looks like, Jesus of Nazareth reminds us. He offers no theory; he doesn't make a lot of noise about it. He lives what he believes. His sayings are not so hard to grasp; but we are blindsided by his way of doing things.

That's what the gospels offer us: models of leadership. We are called to be servants; shepherds; stewards; friends. But how do we apply this? We need sustained reflection and action: telling our own stories; the stories of our organizations; connecting that up to the Jesus story, to other narratives of community . . . circling around in the margins, suddenly we get it. "This is (I am) the way, the truth, the

life” (John 10:6). “I call you friends because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father” (John 15:15). “And greater things than these you will do” (John 14:12, paraphrase).

What happens when such a group, deeply in tune with and affected by Jesus, adjourns the meeting? When such people move onto the ordinary business of the day? Well, it is by such people that the world is being transformed. We will see the changes that such people bring about. Such people will pour their lives out for a living wage and for the reform of education; and for the development of a just social order; for fair housing and fair employment practices; and for the flowering of the creative arts that bring hope and vision to those who cannot always see their way: writers and doctors and social workers and telecommunications workers and lawyers, yes, lawyers and judges and health care workers and parents and educators. They are the ones who are driven by the grace of God and at the same time mired in, stuck in, overwhelmed by the continual burden of a daily routine.



Forging a new humanity.

One of the most articulate philosophers of the future is Wilfrid Desan, who in a large-scale work entitled *Planetary Man* developed a vision of the change in humanity that is necessary to forge a new world. His vision recognizes the flawed nature of human aspiration and endeavor. Even so, he holds up the possibility of a cosmopolis, a world-city and a world-citizen. Although this philosophical statement was published several decades ago, Desan now seems prophetic.

Desan has this to say about “the saint of our times.” He writes:

Only those who are genuinely able to rise above their own self-interest will ultimately command the respect of others. They will be revered as leaders. These are the people whose motives are believed in, who are admired and followed.¹³

Are ordinary people capable of such sacrificial love? Desan thinks they are. He says that saintliness hovers over us average people “as a dream, perhaps, but not as an impossible dream.” Desan is speaking not of people in some particular fields of endeavor; not of those in occupations somehow singled out for sacrificial understanding and kindness; not at all. In fact, his very style of thought, the attempt to define humanity as “planetary,” is predicated upon the notion that each and every woman and man can and must become a world-citizen. In spite of bias, in spite of limitations, this expanded world-consciousness is possible.

Yet here we may find a language gap. We hesitate to speak of a saintly executive, a transformed manager, a transfigured entrepreneur. Words like “love” and “sacrifice” seem foreign in the marketplace. Yet it is clear that the best initiatives are founded in love.

When I interviewed Phyllis Jordan, founder of PJ’s Coffee and Tea Company, a regional franchised enterprise, I did not mention to her that I was wondering whether she could fit into Wilfrid Desan’s definition of a saint. “What attracted you to the coffee business?” I asked. And she said,

I had a friend who was in the coffee business, that gave me the information I needed, the know-how. But beyond being a mentor, she was in the store all the time . . . but I think that sense of her in that place, offering a product which was a shared experience with a friend, that was what attracted me to coffee. I wanted to see people talking to the people they’ve come with, or maybe the people they haven’t come with. I don’t think we can document this, but I know there are major social changes going on, including a return to basics, maybe concern about the environment, a number of things that are converging to make neighborhood experiences and simple values very important. I think specialty coffee in the U.S. is part of that. And I think that . . . is an experience that people can really relate to. That’s where our growth is coming from.

And that's where I think it will continue to develop in the years ahead.¹⁴

Phyllis Jordan is only one of thousands of leaders who design their business lives around the central insight that animates them; the thing they see as making life better for others and yielding at the same time a return to themselves. This basic exchange of the marketplace serves the self; and serves the other. The dream is, moreover, also predicated on a world-vision. The vision includes "people from growing countries and exporters and farmers with roasters and retailers . . . engaged in a very cooperative effort, one that produces win-win solutions for growers and manufacturers and everybody." Jordan is speaking about a trade association, the Specialty Coffee Association. "Everybody along the chain wins," Jordan says, with a certain idealism.¹⁵ Words like these from a regional entrepreneur may sound ordinary. But this is exactly what Desan is speaking about philosophically. In our striving we are reconstructing the world, fulfilling the urge to be and to survive.

And Desan goes further. He says that our good work is a kind of atonement for the sins of our times.¹⁶



God of my daily routine.

In short, you and I are serving God and others with a (sometimes) sacrificial love in a world that is deeply interconnected by grace. And this is what it means to be a world-citizen, one who is shaped by powerful hope and aspiration and by love of neighbor but also hemmed in by the overwhelming details and burdens of living. That daily routine Karl Rahner speaks of, in which we are driven by God, and toward God, and yet in a continual tension and distance from the God we yearn for, this is the furnace, the refining fire in which our actions are shaped and molded, in which our large-scale life tasks take shape and form.

And I encourage you to continue; to persevere. For, whether we know it or not, we are shaping the world out of love. So that, out of the spiritual stuff of our daily routine, and in spite of the humdrum of things, and in spite of disenchantment and discouragement and failure—if we are willing, we will continue to be instruments of God’s gracious will for the world.

Notes

1. See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 291.
2. See William Shannon, *Seeds of Peace: Reflections on Contemplation and Non-Violence* (New York: Crossroad, 1996).
3. William James, “Pragmatism’s Conception of Truth,” in *Pragmatism and Other Essays* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1963), 88–89.
4. Gerald G. May, “To Bear the Beams of Love: Contemplation and Personal Growth,” in *The Way Supplement: Contemplation and the Contemplative Life*, No. 59, Summer 1987, 24–34 (London, England: 114 Mount Street, London W17 6AN, England).
5. John Loudon, “Experiments in Truth,” *Parabola*, Winter 1985, 20, 21, and 23.
6. Karl Rahner, “God of My Daily Routine,” in *Encounters with Silence* (London: Sands & Co., 1960), 45–52.
7. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1943), 86.
8. John Langan, “Saints and Managers: The Challenge and Virtues of the Christian Business Leader,” in *Discovering the Business Vocation: Proceedings of a National Conference* (Washington, D.C.: FADICA [Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities], 1990).
9. *Ibid.*
10. I knew Dr. Costley in the 1970s, when he was handling a number of issues relating to children and media on behalf of Kellogg. I was then the director of a special program on advertising to children, for the Council of Better Business Bureaus in New York City.
11. Dorothy Day, “On Pilgrimage,” *The Catholic Worker*, January 1972, 1.
12. J. Andrew Overman, *Church and Community in Crisis: the Gospel According to Matthew* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1996), 67.
13. Wilfrid Desan, *The Planetary Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 379.
14. Author’s interview with Phyllis Jordan, New Orleans, Louisiana, October 1992.
15. Phyllis Jordan served as president of the Specialty Coffee Association of America in 1992–93.
16. Desan, *The Planetary Man*, 38.