



Prayer is Our Life



One of the most difficult things to do is to pray well. Prayer is like a spiritual barometer of our inner state of health. Even those who are well practiced at it can fall into all kinds of strife. Why is this so? Because prayer demands the attention of our whole person calling upon the mind, the soul, the physical self and most importantly our heart. To turn our attention wholly to God is not easy to do. Yet such devotion is an integral aspect of true love. Jesus instructs us to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” (Matthew 22:37)

Central to the practice of good prayer therefore is the ability for us to direct our full and undivided attention towards God. Even well known prayers that we commit to memory such as the Lord’s Prayer or the Creed should be said as if for the first time calling upon our whole person to attention before God. This requires great concentration and inner strength.

Interests of other kinds that demand our full attention, be they people, activities or material things that take precedence over God can serve as powerful interferences in worship and prayer. Worship and prayer are essential expressions of our love for God. We may feel justified in immersing ourselves in all kinds of activity which are all absorbing and engrossing in our lives. Such activities may include our career, study, occupation, sport, recreation, possessions and so on. But if we allow other things to take precedence over God we will find ourselves in spiritually treacherous ground. For it is only by acknowledging God that we become truly fulfilled in whatever we do, for He is the source of all life and existence. And by this means, by acknowledging Him the source of all that exist and that is love, we can then realise what is paramount in prayer, and that is to practice remembrance of God who is central to every aspect of our life. The more God is forgotten in daily activity, the more difficult it becomes for us to pray or even have our prayers answered because our prayer is reduced to little more than an additive rather than assuming its rightful place as a central and essential ingredient of our relationship and love for God. God not only provides all that we have but has given us life itself to experience those gifts. How can we then enjoy those gifts but fail to remember Him?



How quickly we forget that all things were created by God? Nothing therefore has any legitimate precedence before Him and nothing is beyond Him for all things are of Him and in Him. “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John:1:3)

God does not exclude Himself from His creation, though He does not require anything to sustain Him. He has chosen to be one with His creation. So He is served by us through what is already His.

To ignore the needs of others is a poor foundation for prayer. Our life cannot exist in isolation to God's creation. Unlike God, we cannot self-sustain ourselves. For us to forget what has been provided to us by God is a serious and dangerous indulgence. This is why the fewer things we have, the more we appreciate what we have, and the fewer things we have, the more thankful we are towards God. Materialism undermines our sense of value and true purpose so that we become listless and indifferent leading to forgetfulness of God.

St Paul reminds us to “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (Thess. 5:16-18)

If we understand that nothing takes precedence before God, it follows then that prayer can and should be unceasing because it assumes central importance in glorifying God in all aspects of our life. Is it not due to our short sightedness when we believe that our thoughts, actions, relationships and accomplishments can exist or be enjoyed at the exclusion of God?

What remains for us is to choose those things in life which brings us closer to Him. How is this possible?

Prayer should not be considered merely as an activity at the beginning or end of our day. It cannot be an additive but the essence of our relationship with God. It is good to remember God in the morning and the night, but we are no longer mere children to believe only this, for it is not good only to remember Him then. If prayer is confined to time we learn to excise ourselves from God. All that we do during the day can and should be joined to and directed towards God, and this is the essence of prayer.

Let us examine our conscience, let us consider all our thoughts and all our actions and words as if God could see us and hear us and know us in every respect, because He does. Is there anything that cannot be said or done or thought of without the remembrance of God? Our mind can be trained to be with God always, in our thoughts and in our actions and most especially in our hearts. Our actions can be executed with the knowledge that God is always in our company as He *truly* is. Our judgement and discernment in all our daily duties can act as a powerful witness of our love for Him and for serving others justly and fairly with love.

Is it any wonder therefore that those who choose to practice prayer well are those who dedicate their life to God, as monks and nuns, as priests and as the saints of the Church who live their lives through faith with prayer and fasting in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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