

Friends of Silence

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“Is there enough Silence for the Word to be heard?”

Dear Friends ~ I shall now expose myself for the fraud that I am—I know nothing about prayer, have no attention span, no disciplined prayer practice, and often struggle with depressing periods of doubt. I veer from “Here am I Lord. Forgive my unbelief,” to queasy periods of anxiety or guilt when I think I should pray or fear not to pray, to longer spells of hurrying through life distracted and forgetful. Perhaps if I lived where I heard the muezzin call for prayer five times a day or where monastery bells rang to mark the hours—would that make a difference? It’s a good thing that we are loved all the same. As Anne Lamott says, perhaps it is enough to say, “Help. Wow. Thanks.” Just as flower blossoms emerge on tree limbs that were in winter stark and bare, so too can hearts try once again to open themselves toward Light. It’s not too late...



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In our busy lives it is so easy to forget the Divine, to be immersed in our own problems and our own selves. The mystic knows that what really matters is the inner connection of the heart in which our heart opens and cries. It is something so simple and yet so easily overlooked. Prayer is a way to be with God.

~ from *PRAYER OF THE HEART IN CHRISTIAN AND SUFI MYSTICISM* by Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee

Do not think that the words of prayer as you say them arise to God. It is not the words themselves that ascend; it is the burning desire of your heart that rises like smoke toward heaven.

~ a Hasidic saying

The most powerful prayer, one well nigh omnipotent, and the worthiest work of all is the outcome of a quiet mind. The quieter the mind, the more powerful, the worthier, the deeper, the more telling and more perfect the prayer is. To the quiet mind all things are possible. ~ Meister Eckhart

Today my prayer consisted in simply going to my heart and remembering all the folks I've stored there. It is not cold storage. It is a quite warm and tender place.

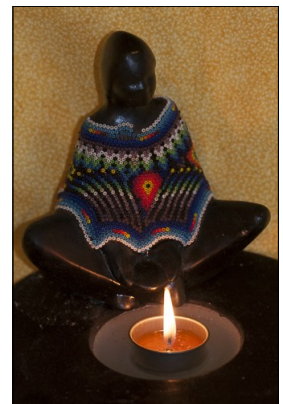
~ from *A TREE FULL OF ANGELS* by Sr. Macrina Wiederkehr, OSB

The human heart is a capacity for God. Prayer, then, is the development of the art of communion. We are called to develop the disciplines required for loving and open communion with God, the world, others, and ourselves. We need to recover the art of communion and so recover the universe as God’s, and rediscover our roots in God, in the world, in one another, and in our inner selves.

~ from *LIVING IN THE SPIRIT* by Rachel Hosmer and Alan Jones

Better a little prayer with devotion than much prayer without devotion.

~ the Talmud



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I draw prayer round me like a dark protective wall, withdraw inside it as one might into a convent cell and then step outside again, calmer and stronger and more collected again.

~ from *AN INTERRUPTED LIFE* by Etty Hillsum

Real prayer penetrates to the marrow of our soul and leaves nothing untouched. The prayer of the heart is prayer that does not allow us to limit our relationship with God to interesting words or pious emotion...the prayer of the heart is the prayer of truth.

~ Henri J. M. Nouwen

The function of prayer is not to establish a routine; it is to establish a relationship with God who is in relationship with us always.... The function of prayer is to bring us into touch with ourselves, as well. To the ancients, "tears of compunction" were the sign of a soul that knew its limits, faced its sins, accepted its needs, and lived in hope.

~ Joan Chittister, quoted in *ESSENTIAL MONASTIC WISDOM*, by Hugh Feiss

"Only those who obey a rhythm superior to their own are free," wrote Kazantzakis. The superior rhythm is the one made by God and whispered into us at the time that we were whispered into being. It is a rhythm based on the light and darkness of the day. itself...a rhythm that supports all of our lives—prayer, rest, community and work. We are called to live lives that are shaped and nurtured and

wrestled with until they become a prayer that is prayed without ceasing. To do that will require a rule of some sort, even if it is The Rule of Saint Whatever-Your-Name-Is.

~ from *A GOOD LIFE* by Robert Benson

Prayer is sitting in the silence until it silences us, choosing gratitude until we are grateful, praising God until we ourselves are a constant act of praise.

~ from *RADICAL GRACE* by Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM

We meditate in the library's garden, desolate in winter. We shiver but aren't in a hurry. .. After a while I feel more rested, and strangely fortified, too, as though by a company of unseen helpers, wise ones who know what it means to live with a heart as open as a clear blue sky, as passionate as the summer sun, as patient as rain on rock. How I want to live that way. A Zen saying burrows into my quiet, becomes a prayer: "May I walk hand in hand with you, ancestors, the hair of my eyebrows entangled with yours."The empty garden is full.

~ from *THE EMPTINESS OF OUR HANDS* by Phyllis Cole-Dai & James Murray

Prayer is not asking. Prayer is putting oneself in the hands of God, at God's disposition, and listening for Love's voice in the depths of our hearts.

~ Mother Teresa



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The sun hears the fields talking about
effort
and the sun smiles,
and whispers to me,
"Why don't the fields just rest, for
I am willing to do
everything
to help them grow?"
Rest, my dears, in prayer.

~ St. Catherine of Siena



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Prayer is not an idle occupation. It's a very powerful instrument of our work and love.

~ Julian of Norwich