

PRAYER - PART TWO

As I looked over Part One of Prayer, you are probably wondering where I am going with this. I do have a goal in mind. The first goal is get us all *on the same page*. So if this isn't new to you, good, then it will be a review. If it is, please let me know if I am going too fast or too deep. This is the talk that I gave to our new men in Africa who want to join the Marianists.

Just to highlight, Prayer is either **public** or **private**. We need and hopefully do both. Unfortunately, we as even Christians tend to do only **Public Prayer** most of the time, that is, we tend to go to Mass on Sunday and that's it, we did our duty. For me, it is like saying, I ate my meal on Sunday and that's enough. We know that it will not sustain us physically and it will not sustain us spiritually simply because prayer is entering into a relationship with God. In spiritual reality, prayer should be like breathing. Any relationship with another PERSON will not last if communication is few and far between!

I also mentioned that Public Prayer is **Liturgy**, the work of the people, what we as Christian do when we gather usually on Sundays. In the early church it would be unthinkable to miss the Sunday Liturgy, and many bishops threatened excommunication for missing too many masses in a row. The reasoning is that the person has cut themselves off from the community by missing the most important public Faith Community event.

Through our Baptism we are given the right to pray for ourselves and for others. Without Baptism, who are we to think we can pray for ourselves and others? Public Prayer is a **public witness** to others of our faith community's **commitment to God**, and as a corporate witness, it can be very powerful, especially if we are known as a community of prayer. Whether we realize it or not, others will notice and even be attracted to God because they knew of their public and personal witness.

Before I begin this section on PERSONAL PRAYER, let me add to the Jewish way of prayer in the time of Jesus. Their PUBLIC PRAYER was centered on sacrifice, usually an animal, but also of bread! Interestingly enough, their Passover meal was in the HOME! The MEN would go to the temple to pray, but women had to

go to a separate section of the temple. Only men could be closer to the HOLY OF HOLIES, but that is another talk.

Generally, PERSONAL or PRIVATE PRAYER falls into three general categories: Meditation, Affectation, and Contemplation.

MEDITATION is the type of prayer that is done in the HEAD. A person prepares themselves by reading Scripture first, or picking a faith belief, dogma, (etc.) topic to reflect on. In the seminaries, the person was usually given a topic to reflect on or **meditate** on by the rector. In the monasteries, a type of prayer called: **Lectio Divina**, was the prayerful reading of Scripture. This type of prayer is done MENTALLY! St. Thomas Aquinas would be an example of promoting and using this type of prayer.

AFFECTATION is the type of prayer that is done using the HEART, usually with the emotions and being attentive to them. One can also use the Scriptures or dogmatic statements, etc, as above, but the person is more interested in the feelings that are generated. For example, reading the story of the disciples and Jesus in the boat. One is attentive to every detail of the story and feelings that are stirred up, especially when the storm hits them almost sinks their boat. This type of prayer was used by St. Ignatius of Loyola, especially in his Thirty Day Retreat.

Under the heading of **Affective Prayer** would come the type of prayer that might be just a prayerful *walk in the woods*. St. Francis would be a good example of this type of prayer. One would be attentive to God's creation all around them and how one would react in a prayerful way literally to a walk in the park.

CONTEMPLATION would include the **Prayer of Quiet** where the person would still themselves and allow GOD TO TALK to them! Even though this is probably the most simple it is also the hardest. The main reason is that it seems we are wasting our time just sitting there, but that is the most important part because IN FAITH we believe that God is sitting there with us. The other reason, it is so difficult to quiet our active brain and we can get and do get easily distracted.

There is no way we can shut off our minds and emotions. That only comes at death. So part of the technique is to find a **word** or **phrase** that brings us back to our quiet. That is why this prayer is sometimes called **Centering Prayer**. This practice of bringing ourselves back to prayer, *letting go of the thought*, is the

most powerful part of this prayer. Practiced over time we find ourselves letting go of many things and thoughts that lead us astray, even feelings. Eventually it brings peace. And for those who have practiced this prayer over the years, God eventually takes over and brings us to places we will never know but will have a residual intuition.

All Prayer will eventually lead us to this last part of Contemplation, in other words, Mental Prayer (or mediation), and Affective Prayer, will lead to this final part of Quiet. Even Good Liturgies will lead us there to that Quiet if properly observed in the service. Since Contemplation is the *practice of letting go and letting God*, this last part is when **God takes over**. And that will be the topic of our next talk.