

MAY JESUS CHRIST BE PRAISED

FEBRUARY 5, 2017

SPIRITUAL PONDERINGS

PRAYER Part I

I would like to devote this month's spiritual ponderings into a series of reflections on prayer with the hope that your prayer life and my own will grow and bring even closer to the Lord.

Prayer, I have come to believe is one of those things that many people tell us we should do but very few people know exactly how to pray themselves and even less know how to teach others how to pray. This is sad because prayer is such an

important part of the life of a Christian. If I could go back in time and teach myself to pray as I do now, these would be the ten things I would stress.

1. **Pray As You Can**

One morning in the parish office the pastor and his two associates were arguing what was the best position for prayer as an internet repair man worked nearby.

"Kneeling is definitely the best posture for prayer," the pastor claimed.

"No, you are wrong," chimed in one of the associates. "I find the best way to pray is to stand up and stretch your hands outward

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towards heaven." "You are both wrong," insisted the third priest. "The most effective stance for prayer is lying prostrate face down on the floor."

The repair man could not contain himself any longer. "He fathers," he interrupted, "the best praying I ever did was when I was hanging upside down from a telephone pole."

Breaking Open The Word

5th Sun. OT Lectionary: 73

Gospel MT 5:13-16

Spiritual Reflection:

Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan once wrote: "The great-hearted person is not boastful, but possess a spirit of self-sacrifice. This person is like a lump of sugar or a grain of salt which, when dissolved, adds flavor to food."

Spiritual Questions

1. Are we making other people's lives better by adding a little flavor of self-sacrifice into their lives or are we making them worst because we do not assist them in their need?
2. Can we humbly make someone's life better without boasting or gloating about it?
3. Can we help others reach their potential while still humble remaining in the background?
4. Can we let others be the center of attention?
5. Can we let others be the center of attention without getting down on ourselves?

Growing up many people told me that I needed to pray but no one ever really took the time to teach me to pray. When I entered the seminary, I felt like I was way behind my brother seminarians when it came to prayer. This problem was magnified by the fact that I found myself focusing on the

ways other prayed instead of learning how to pray.

One day someone told me that St. Ignatius of Loyola stated that “we should all pray as we can and not as we can't.” Upon hearing this statement, I found a new interest in discovering different styles of prayer. This searching eventually led me to me to journaling prayer. As I begin to pray I pretend that I am a child at summer camp and that I am writing my Father in heaven about all the things that have happened throughout the day. There are days in which I write a lot and there are days I write a little, throughout both experiences, I feel that God speaks to me in the silence of my heart as I ponder what to write and what to do next in my life.

I also have a good friend, who loves to write but he has come to realize that his writing is not prayer because all he does put his ideas on paper and there is no conversation taking place with God. He has discovered the best way for him to pray is to use his imagination. He simply imagines Jesus and him having a conversation.

Praying as you can and not as you can't make sense because each of us is different. My mother who has six children knows that she had to approach each one of us differently because we each have our own

needs but more importantly we each have our own talents and strengths. My mother knows that I often I just need someone to talk to and to tell my story to knowing that I won't be judged. My mother has come to learn that the worst thing she can do when I am like this is offer advice because her advice, no matter how good, just makes me angry. On the other hand, I have a brother who when telling her his problems wants her advice and if she would offer him none than he would be upset. We are each different in our own ways and thus we each build our prayer life a little differently.

2. Formal prayer/Informal Prayer

If a major-league baseball pitcher has only a fastball in his repertoire he will not be a good pitcher. He must eventually develop an off-speed pitch to compliment his fastball to become a better pitcher. In the same way, formal prayer (prayers that everyone knows or can memorize) and informal prayer (prayers in which are impromptu or spontaneous) are meant to complement each other.

When I was learning to pray spontaneously and to express to God what was

on my heart, I found myself begin to develop a disdain for formal prayers like the Our Father and Hail Mary. A wise priest helped me see the errors of my way when he explained that there are sometimes things that we simply do not have the words to express what we are feeling or what we want and so these formal prayers are a great way of

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letting God know that I trust Him and I want His will to be done even though I don't have any other word express what is on my heart.

I also know that if my prayer life only consists of formal prayers my relationship with God will stall. It is important that I share with Him what is in my heart through informal prayers. God wants to know what is going on in my life, not because He doesn't know, but because it is a bonding experience and He loves me.

PRAYER OF THE WEEK

Story Subtitle or summary

February 2nd was the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord. It is the day that we celebrate the fact that Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the temple and encountered Simeon who proclaimed what is now known as "The Canticle of Simeon." The Canticle of Simeon is prayed by all who pray the Liturgy of the Hours as a part of Night Prayer.

"Canticle of Simeon"
Lord, now you let your servant go in peace, your word has been fulfilled: My own eyes have seen the salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of every people: a light to reveal you to the nations and the glory of your people Israel. Amen.

CATHOLIC TRIVIA

Story Subtitle or summary

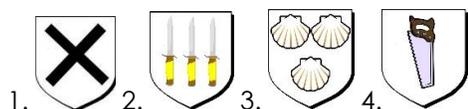
Last Week Answers:

Identify which of the following 3 are not gifts of the Holy Spirit.

- 1. Wisdom
- 2. Trustworthiness
- 3. Understanding
- 4. Counsel
- 5. Devotedness
- 6. Fortitude
- 7. Bilocation
- 8. Knowledge
- 9. Piety
- 10. Fear of the Lord

This Week's Questions:

Identify the following Apostles' Coat of Arms.



CATHOLIC HUMOR

Story Subtitle or summary

1. A little boy pulls on the preacher's hand to get his attention. Then says, "I'm going to give you money when I grow up." The preacher says, "Thank you very much but why do you want to give me money when you grow up?" The little boy replies, "My dad says that you are the "poorest" preacher we have ever had."

2. First Day on the Job: A passenger in a taxi tapped the driver on the shoulder to ask him something. The driver screamed, lost control of the cab, nearly hit a bus, drove up over the curb, and stopped just inches from a large plate glass window. For a few moments everything was silent in the cab, then the driver said,

SPIRITUAL ADOPTION

Spiritual Adoption 0-1 Month

I am asking you to spiritual adopt a child who is in danger of being aborted by praying the following prayer every day for the child.

"Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I love you very much. I beg you to spare the life of [baby's name] the unborn baby that I have spiritually adopted who is in danger of abortion." - Prayer of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen.

You can also keep track of your spiritual baby's progress by checking out the informational articles below each month.

DAY 1–Developing Baby-

"I'm here!"

At the moment, the father's sperm and mother's egg unite a new and unrepeatable human being comes into existence, complete with his own unique set of DNA. Although she is only one cell, everything about this little person is already present: color of eyes, blood type, the height she will grow to be, color of hair – everything! She will play a role in her family and her community – a role only she can play! Nothing is added after conception to make her a complete human being. She already exists; all she needs is nourishment, a safe, warm environment, and most of all – love. Her parents don't even know she exists yet. Pray for them to safely bring their baby to birth so she can fulfill the mission God has for her.

"please, don't ever do that again. You scared the daylights out of me." The passenger, who was also frightened, apologized and said he didn't realize that a tap on the shoulder could frighten him so much. The driver replied, "I'm sorry, it's really not your fault at all. Today is my first day driving a cab. I have been driving a hearse for the last 25 years!"

CATHOLIC QUOTES

"Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you." -St. Augustine

"Don't you long to shout to those youths who are bustling around you: Fools! Leave those worldly things that shackle the heart – and very often degrade it – leave all that and come with us in search of Love!" -St. Josemaria Escriva

"For me prayer is a surge of the heart, it is a simple look towards Heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy." -St. Therese of Lisieux