



Priestly People

SERVANTS OF THE PARACLETE

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Praying Always



It seems as if we just celebrated the New Year and the beautiful Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. Early in our calendar year we continue with great days of liturgical celebration - Holy Family, Baptism of Jesus and Unborn Children.

How quickly the Church takes us from the joys of Christmas and the New Year into the mystery of suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus. The Church wishes to remind us that, even amid our celebrations of Christian joy at Christmas, the shadow of the cross hovers over the birth of our Savior.

Just as joys and sorrows are mingled in the lives of all human beings, so, too, are they present in the life of Jesus. When

He took on our human flesh, He took on all that went with it, except sin. He took on the suffering, pain, abandonment, betrayal and, finally, death itself. Jesus is no stranger to all the pain and struggles we all, to one degree or another, must undergo.

Jesus also underwent one suffering which none of us will ever have to undergo at the moment of His death, in some mysterious way, He suffered even the abandonment of His Father: "My God, My God, why have you abandoned me?" This we will never have to endure, for there is never a time and there never will be a time when God will abandon us. Jesus has promised us: "I am with you all days, even to the

end of the world.” Certainly, there seem to be times in our lives when we feel abandoned But with certainty of Faith we know that our God is always with us. We have but to seek Him and we will find Him.

One of the most important things in our lives is fostering and maintaining our union with our God. We have learned from the time of our childhood that this union is made possible by prayer. And yet, so many of us have difficulty praying. Oftentimes we feel that we are merely repeating vague formulas learned in infancy and recited by rote for the rest of our lives. At other times we feel that our prayers are disappearing into a void – that no one is really hearing us. Sometimes our souls feel so dry that we feel it does no good to pray. At other times we are filled with distractions and we feel that prayer is useless. Surely, we have all felt these elements in our prayer life.

The dynamic of prayer is: UNION AND COMMUNION WITH GOD.

The goal of prayer is: A life of friendship with God, cooperating with His Spirit, living His Will in this world. Thus, we must be intentional about moving from a specific time of prayer (which many do) into a life of prayer by consciously seeking to relate all of our life to God.

That is our prayer and we will always know where to find Jesus in our lives.

Reflection 1: Prayer is Natural

We all pray, and we pray because it is part of our nature. Prayer is related to our search for a meaning IN our lives; it is related to our need to grow. It is an expression of the hunger of the human soul for God.

This hunger is a part of who we are!

READ: Psalm 63, verses 1-2 and Matthew 5, verse 6

We have an abundance of food and drink. Have you ever been deprived and experienced hunger and thirst? If so, what did it feel like when you finally found food and drink?

- How do you see hunger affecting others? Perhaps you can think of specific persons – if so, name them.
- How does this hunger manifest itself in them?

Looking at others helps us to look at ourselves. How do you feel right now about your hunger for God?

“I want to learn to pray. I open my mind to you, Lord. Teach me to pray.”

grateful
thankful
blessed

TRY TO REMEMBER DURING THE DAY THE PERSONS YOU NAMED ABOVE IN WHOM YOU HAVE SEEN THE HUNGER FOR GOD WORKING. SIMPLY ASK GOD TO BLESS THEM AND SATISFY THEIR LONGING. BE OPEN TO GOD, PERHAPS USING YOU TO MEET THEIR NEEDS!

Reflection 2: It is not too easy to really pray

There is a difference between the tendency to pray and the practice of prayer. We have the tendency to cry out in the face of pain and trouble and we feel joy in the presence of beauty, etc. We express these sporadically according to the moods of our lives. To live prayer, however, is something else. To pray consistently is not easy. It requires commitment and discipline.

Do not condemn yourself if you find praying difficult.

READ: Mark 14, verses 32 – 42

Look back over the last two or three years of your life. Can you plot your prayer life in terms of high or low periods? Perhaps you can identify the circumstances of these high and low prayer periods.

- What are your primary difficulties in prayer?

THINK ABOUT THIS CHRIST WANTS YOU TO PRAY NATURALLY, BUT HE UNDERSTANDS YOUR DIFFICULTIES IN PRAYING IN A DISCIPLINED WAY. HE WANTS YOU TO FIND A CREATIVE DISCIPLINE WHICH WILL FREE YOU TO PRAY MORE DEEPLY AND MORE MEANINGFULLY.

Reflection 3: Taste and see that the Lord is good

READ: Psalm 34, verses 4 – 8

Spend five minutes in silent reflection on the heading above. What does it say to you?

- In prayer we begin and end with God. The God to whom we pray is good! This is the primary foundation on which we build our life of prayer. We know God! We know that God's goodness has often been misused by humans for evil purposes. In our lives we often experience much that is not good. Yet God always offers us the good in all circumstances.

READ: Matthew 7, verse 11

- Look at your own practice of prayer. Has your prayer been rooted in the conviction that God is good?

Saint Augustine once said: "The Lord loves every one of us as though there were but one of us to love." What does that statement say to you?

REMEMBER GOD LOVES YOU AS THOUGH YOU WERE THE ONLY PERSON TO LOVE.

Reflection 4: God is good, and we can communicate with Him

In prayer we must make two assumptions:

1. God is good and He wants good things for all His children
2. Communication with God is possible.

Do we really believe that we can talk with God and that He will hear, listen and respond to us?

- In the Old Testament the dominant image of God is the Abba Image, the image of God as Father/Mother. This is the image that Jesus uses so often when He speaks of His father.

READ: Matthew 6, verses 25 - 26; Luke 15 and Matthew 18, verse 14

- For five minutes think of this: God cares for me as an individual. Do you really believe this? Do you pray as though you believe it? God cares for ME!
- Meditate on God as a caring Father/Mother who wants to communicate with you. He wants to hear what you are thinking, feeling, desiring. If you really believe that about God, what are the five most important things you like to say to Him?

IN A QUIET MOMENT TODAY SIMPLY TALK TO GOD AS YOU WOULD TO YOUR OWN FATHER AND/OR MOTHER ABOUT WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU TODAY!

GREETINGS FROM THE SERVANTS OF THE PARACLETE.

I hope some of our former guests receive a copy of our publication "*Priestly People*" as I wish to reach them and ask a favor. The servants are preparing for a General Chapter of Affairs to be held next year. Between now and then we would like to get a clear picture of our assets and liabilities. Obviously, we want to build our future on the things we do that are effective and from which you may have benefitted. On the other hand, we would like to avoid the things which were not the best practice.

It would help us greatly if you would kindly write to me with your evaluation. Your contribution will help us in a very important way to discern the way forward for our Congregation. Also, I would invite all readers to contribute to our assessment from your experience and insight into our ministry as it has been reflected in *Priestly People* which some of you have been receiving for many years.

You may wish to write to me anonymously at this email address - spchapter2020@gmail.com or send comments to:

Father John Murphy sP, 6476 Eime Road, Dittmer MO 63023

Thank you for any help you are able to give us.

John Murphy sP



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 Newsletter

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