

Notes on Prayer – Fr. Christopher Panagoplos, TOR

Four basic forms of prayer:

- *Blessing/Adoration*: praising God for giving us life, the wonder and beauty of creation.
- *Petition*: asking God for something that is good--for ourselves or for others; we are mindful of the needs of others as well as of our own.
- *Intercession*: expresses the nature of the Church's existence for the life of the world, for the well-being of others; to secure great peace of mind and heart, and advocacy for the revelation of God's glory.
- *Thanksgiving*: gratitude for God's many blessings--spiritual and temporal.

God speaks to us in word, Scripture, the individual, listening, liturgy, creation and community

Discernment is the key.

From the Saints:

St Bonaventure:

- A divine-human relationship
- Turning of the mind and heart to God
- Ascent to God begins with descent into one's humanity.
- To listen to the Spirit within
- God is infinite love; in the Incarnation, God bends down to meet us where we are, embracing us.
- God is always with us.

St Augustine:

- an affectionate reaching out to God
- a desire for God
- Grace enables desire.

St Francis:

- Experiences God in the Cross; conversion period is his prayer.
- Prayer is our awakening to the grace of God in our lives.
- One will not experience God apart from the fragility of his own life, and others'.
- "If you desire nothing else, desire to have the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's manner of working in you".
- Admonition 5: (wisdom saying), becoming aware of the value of the human person
- We have the capacity for God, but we are fallen, ourselves bent over and blinded
- recognizes the greatness of God
- God has created us in His image.
- Ilia Delio: God is the most high (altissime) and the most intimately related to us (piissime) at once; the One who has created this entire creation has called us to be intimately in relationship.

St Angela Foligno:

- She is "no self" without God.
- "The more you pray, the more you are enlightened; the more enlightened, the more you see; the deeper and more perfect your vision, the more you love; and the more you love, the more you will delight in what you see."

Letter to St Clare from Bonaventure:

- Return to your own self.
- Enter into your heart.
- Ponder what you were, what you are, what should have been, what can be:
 - what you were by nature;
 - what you now are through sin;
 - what you should have been through effort;
 - what you still can be through grace.
- Meditate in your heart.
- Let your spirit brood.
- Plow this field, work on yourself.
- God will never force us.
- Wipe your inner vision clean.
- Lack of self-knowledge, and failure to appreciate one's own worth, make for faulty judgment in all matters.
- As long as you are unable to understand your own self, how should you be able to understand what is above you?

Thomas Merton:

- God permeates our life, personally.
- God utters me as if a word, as if a partial word of Himself; I am something of that word.

Notes of Contemplation:

1. Awareness is central, is unitive;
 - It reduces the distance between me and that of which I am aware;
 - It brings us together;
 - It unites;
 - Heart meets God and His presence in creation;
 - Body, mind, and spirit come together as a contemplation gaze:
See 1st Rule 23, 8; 2nd Rule 10, 9-10.
2. Contemplation:
 - the totality of reality as it exists before God; putting off of my false self, finding my true self in God, inseparable from God;
 - Gospel of St John 14-17: contemplation is "oneness with God;" "*to abide,*" "*to live on in*".

- St Paul on discipleship: The community of those who profess "Jesus is Lord" is not made up of isolated individuals, but of persons joined to one another in a series of interlocking relationships that make them one with God in Christ.
- Oneness in discipleship is what Paul means by the "Body of Christ,;" and "to be in Christ".

3. Franciscan prayer:

- is contemplative prayer;
- begins with the gaze of the Crucified Christ, to see there the humble love of God;
- a penetrating gaze of the other, and a deepening of love;
- an ongoing action of transformation;
- leads to a solidarity with all creation;
- 1st Rule 22, 5-8:
"Believing, looking with one's heart, loving, honoring, adoring, serving, praising, blessing, glorifying, exalting, magnifying, rendering thanks".

4. St Francis:

- Admonition 1: contemplation is seeing God in Christ with the eyes of the Spirit; contemplation is the vision of God's humility.
- The meaning of the Incarnation which is encountered in the Eucharist.

5. St Clare:

- Contemplation begins with the mirror of the Crucified Christ; seeing oneself in daily prayer before the Cross; to accept God in the Crucified is to accept God in our own lives, to accept who we are; the more we contemplate Christ, the more we come to resemble Christ.
- Contemplation is conversion through imitation of Christ;
 - to be transformed in union with the beloved--"to put on Christ;"
 - Transformation is imitation insofar as Christ "comes alive" in one's life.
- Contemplation is seeing with the eyes of the heart;
 - To enter into the love of contemplative union is to re-center one's heart in God -
"Love Him totally who gave Himself totally for your love."

6. St Bonaventure:

- Contemplation is the union of knowledge and love--the attainment of wisdom; we are by nature oriented toward God (Delio: "wired for God").
- "Just as no one comes to wisdom except through grace, so no one comes to contemplation except by penetrating meditation, a holy life, and devout prayer".
- Wisdom is the fruit of union which leads to a proper relationship with God and creation.