

April 07, 2019 – Fifth Sunday of Lent

*MAY JESUS CHRIST BE PRAISED
NOW AND FOREVER!!!*

SPIRITUAL PONDERINGS

Prayer: Our Deepest Longing I

I am excited to share with you some insights that I have gained about prayer from Fr. Ronald Rolheiser's book: *Prayer Our Deepest Longing*. Quotes from his book will be in bold and my reflections will be in the normal font.

Spirituality is as real as science. But that is not easy to understand or believe. We live in a world where what is real has been reduced to what is physical, to what can be empirically measured, seen, touched, tasted, and smelled. We live in a world that is for the most part spiritually tone-deaf, where all the goods are in the store window, digitized, or reduced to a flat screen. And so, prayer is a struggle. So are a lot of other things. When the surface is all there is, it is hard to be enchanted by anything to see depth, to be deeply touched by poetry, faith, and love.

Prayer



I watched a documentary on one of the streaming services about the history of the Navy Seals. The documentary explained that origins of the Navy Seals can be traced back to World War II when the United States and its allies had to invade Europe and many islands in the South Pacific. Aerial scout flights would report calm beaches that should be easy to invade because they were not able to see deep into the water and see the danger of manmade water hazards and coral reefs. Eventually allies would send experience divers to these beaches ahead of the invasions in order to discover the real hazards to an ally landing. In much the same way, a person's life may look calm and peaceful on the surface. It is only when he or she goes below the surface do you discover the pain, the brokenness, the fear and the insecurity – the woundedness. For prayer to be successful, we have to be willing to go deeper and not just stay on the surface.

Ultimately, our restless aching is a yearning for God. We need to connect with God. We need prayer. We know this, both in our more reflective moments and in our more desperate moments. It is then that we feel our need for prayer and try to go to that deep place. But given our lack of trust and our lack of practice, we struggle to get there. We do not know how to pray or how to sustain ourselves in prayer.

The more I pray (talk) to God the more I trust Him and the more I trust Him the deeper I can go in prayer. I used to make the mistake and think that all my experiences had to be mystical experience right off the bat. Now, I see that my relationship with God is like other relationships. The more we trust the other person the deeper our relationships can become. The biggest danger to my relationship with God is not God wanting to do me harm (because God is love) but rather my neglecting my relationship with God because God will not force Himself upon me.

There is no bad way to pray and there is no one starting point for prayer. All the great spiritual masters offer only one non-negotiable rule. You have to show up for prayer and you have to show up regularly. Everything else is negotiable and respects your unique circumstances.

The best piece of advice, I received when it came to prayer was to “pray as I can and not as I can’t.” When I was in the

seminary, a lot of guys would pray using a method called “centering prayer” where they would sit in the chapel and meditate on the love of Jesus. The many times, I tried to do this my mind would wander so much that I never felt like God and I connected. Eventually, someone challenged me to start journaling prayer and I discovered that this was the best way for me to pray. This does not mean that I don’t pray in other ways, but I just know that this is the best way for me. Sometimes, I think Catholics give up on prayer instead of exploring all of the rich tradition our Church has around prayer. It is also important to remember to give each method of prayer you are trying a healthy amount of time before you decide it is not working for you. Sometimes, some prayer forms need a lot of practice before they become routine. Think of learning to pray like learning to play golf. In golf you are always trying to perfect your swing and in Catholic life you are always trying to better your ability to converse with God.

Moreover, prayer is not easy because we are greedy for experience. The spiritual writer Henri Nouwen put this well: “I want to pray,” he once said, “but I also don’t want to miss out on anything---television, movies, socializing with friends, drinking in the world.” Because we don’t want to miss out on any experience, prayer, is truly a discipline. When we sit or kneel in prayer, our natural craving for experience feels starved and begins to protest. Just like homework, exercise, and thing else worthwhile, prayer means giving up other things so we can dedicate ourselves to something we consider more important.

THOUGHT OF THE DAY

Sunday

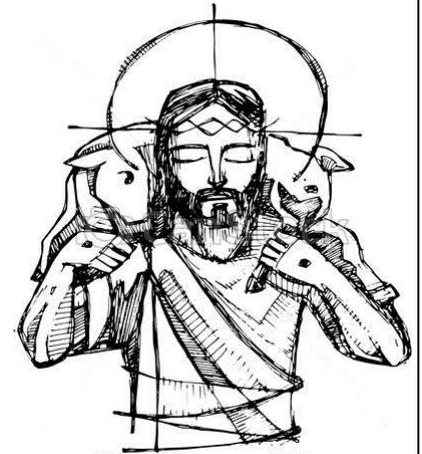
You will achieve more in this world through acts of mercy than you will through acts of retribution. - Nelson Mandela

Monday

If you judge people, you have no time to love them. - Mother Teresa

Tuesday

The two greatest banners that were ever unfurled were the uplifted serpent and the uplifted Savior. And yet there was an infinite difference between them. The theatre of the one was the desert, and the audience was a few thousand Israelites; the theatre of the other was the universe and the audience, the whole of mankind. From one came a bodily healing, soon to be undone again by death; from the other flowed soul-healing, unto life everlasting. And yet one was the prefigurement of the other. – Fulton Sheen



Wednesday

"Goals are like a map. They help us determine where we want to end up, and give us personal direction on which to focus our energy." Catherine Pulsifer

Thursday

Each human being, however small or weak, has something to bring to humanity. As we start to really get to know others, as we begin to listen to each other's stories, things begin to change. We begin the movement from exclusion to inclusion, from fear to trust, from closedness to openness, from judgment and prejudice to forgiveness and understanding. It is a movement of the heart. - Jean Vanier

Friday

Community is not an ideal; it is people. It is you and I. In community we are called to love people just as they are with their wounds and their gifts, not as we want them to be. - Jean Vanier

Saturday

The search for a scapegoat is the easiest of all hunting expeditions. - Dwight D. Eisenhower



BREAKING OPEN THE WORD

April 7 2019//Year C Fifth Sunday of Lent//Lectionary: 36 Gospel JN 8:1-11

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. But early in the morning he arrived again in the temple area, and all the people started coming to him, and he sat down and taught them. Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and made her stand in the middle. They said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" They said this to test him, so that they could have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with his finger. But when they continued asking him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he bent down and wrote on the ground. And in response, they went away one by one, beginning with the elders. So he was left alone with the woman before him. Then Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She replied, "No one, sir." Then Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin anymore."

Spiritual Reflection: St. Augustine wrote: "Sin is looking for the right thing in the wrong place." I believe Jesus is able to forgive the woman caught in adultery because He did not take her sin as a personal attack against Him. Instead He saw a woman who was hurt and injured because she looked for infinite love in finite human beings instead of in God. I have discovered in life that most people who have hurt me in life have not done it out of a malice against me but rather out of an ignorance because they have been focused on something else.

Spiritual Questions:

1. How does reflecting on your own sinfulness make you more or less compassionate?
2. Why do you think that they were trying to trap Jesus in this way?
3. Have you ever gotten out of something that you should not have? Like a speeding ticket?
4. How do you think the woman felt after this incident?
5. How does this relate to the Cross when Jesus said "Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing"



PRAYER FOR RESPECT OF LIFE

Heavenly Father, the beauty and dignity of human life was the crowning of your creation. You further ennobled that life when your Son became one with us in his incarnation. Help us to realize the sacredness of human life and to respect it from the moment of conception until the last moment at death. Give us courage to speak with truth and love and with conviction in defense of life. Help us to extend the gentle hand of mercy and forgiveness to those who do not reverence your gift of life. To all, grant pardon for the times we have failed to be grateful for your precious gift of life or to respect it in others. We ask this in Jesus' Name. Amen.



St. Monica Society

Please join us in praying a special prayer each month for Catholics who have fallen away from their faith.

THE PRAYER, SPIRITUAL ARMOR OF PRAYER.

Heavenly Father, we ask bless those who have fallen away and us who have remained of You today for Your truth, As a belt tight around our waists. We put on the zeal, to announce Your good news of peace, As shoes for our feet. We put on Your righteousness, O Christ, as our breastplate. And the hope of salvation, As a helmet for our head. Father we take up faith, as a shield which is able to put out, All the fiery darts of the enemy. And the sword of the Spirit, which is Your Word, O Lord. Father may the love, with which You have loved Jesus, be in us and may Jesus be in us. We ask You for the grace, Of a servant heart. Amen.



CATHOLIC PRAYER:

PRAYER FOR OUR FAMILY

Heavenly Father, you have given us the model of life in the Holy Family of Nazareth. Help us, O Loving Father, to make our family another Nazareth where love, peace and joy reign. May it be deeply contemplative, intensely eucharistic, revived with joy. Help us to stay together in joy and sorrow in family prayer. Teach us to see Jesus in the members of our families, especially in their distressing disguise. May the eucharistic heart of Jesus make our hearts humble like his and help us to carry out our family duties in a holy way. May we love one another as God loves each one of us, more and more each day, and forgive each other's faults as you forgive our sins. Help us, O Loving Father, to take whatever you give and give whatever you take with a big smile. Immaculate Heart of Mary, cause of our joy, pray for us. St. Joseph, pray for us. Holy Guardian Angels, be always with us, guide and protect us. Amen. (Author: Mother Teresa of Calcutta)



Humor

