

Meditation Prayer Tuesday 19 April 2022

I have been thinking recently of the different ways we can pray. Life can get so busy that we may only be able to snatch a moment to ask Jesus to be with us, if it is something difficult, or to thank him when we are grateful. There are times when we may not even do this. It can be hard to find time to sit down quietly for even ten minutes and at the end of the day we can be so tired that it either doesn't happen or we just want our prayers to be over as quickly as possible.

So during my times of feeling how inadequately I am praying, I was reminded of a book "Sleeping with Bread". It has been on my shelf for a few years, although I did read it when I first bought it and followed the method of praying for a while. It may have a strange title but the book begins by telling us that "During the bombing raids of WW II thousands of children were orphaned and left to starve. The fortunate ones were rescued and placed in refugee camps but many children could not sleep at night. They feared waking up to find themselves homeless again and without food. Finally, someone hit upon the idea of giving each child a piece of bread to hold at bedtime. Holding their bread, these children could finally sleep in peace because the bread reminded them 'Today I ate and I will eat again tomorrow'.

The method of prayer described in this book is the *Examen*. This method is a time when we can let the day play back to us in any order and look first at those moments of that particular day for which we are grateful. Relish these moments and relive them and thank God for them. They are his gift to us, the sacrament of his presence. Avoid any self-judgement – just thank God.

We can pray for enlightenment "Lord, that I may see" as we look at our moods and inner feelings during the day without judging them. Basically we are looking for the moment of the day when we were most grateful and also the moment when we are least grateful. Moods and inner feelings arise from our desires and our habitual desires become attitudes. When our desires/attitudes are satisfied, we are content; when they are frustrated, we become discontent. We are praying to know the attitudes underlying our moods. Are our desire/attitudes directed to his Kingdom or are they directed to our own personal kingdom, our wealth, status, honour, comfort, success – wanting creation to praise and serve us.

We can express sorrow for not responding to God in the events of the day and ask for his forgiveness, and thank him too for the times we have responded. Asking his guidance for tomorrow and entrusting ourselves to his Goodness.

We can do this method alone or with a friend or in a group. We can also *Journal* by writing down all our thoughts and feelings for the day.

Another method of praying is *Imaginative Contemplation* which is especially suitable for Gospel passages. Read the passage several times until it is familiar. Then imagine the event is happening now and that you are a participant active in the scene. Don't worry if your imagination doesn't present the scene vividly or if you find it difficult to enter the scene, imagine trying to describe it to a child making it as vivid as possible. It can help attentiveness to ask yourself of any scene, who is present, what are they doing, what are they saying and you can join in with them. If distractions come, let them enter the Gospel scene for they may draw you deeper into it. Talk with the characters in the scene, talk to Christ, to the Father, always speak from the heart, simply and

honestly. Don't worry if your mind keeps straying from the scheme, when you become conscious of inattention, bring yourself back to the scene gently.

There are other methods we can adopt to help our prayer life, but I hope that these three methods of praying are helpful.