

Sr. Margaret Dorgan's Weekly

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FROM RUSH TO HUSH

Praying is always grace at work in your life, in my life. And grace is the gift of the Holy Spirit to your mind and heart. In praying, I collect the fragments of my life, pull them all together and offer them to God with the entreaty that my God will bless them and make them holy. The grace God gives me when I pray opens my eyes to new realities. It brings the fragments together into a fresh wholeness. The rush of the workaholic world of the twenty-first century calms down to a tempo of inner stillness where I can reflect in peace on the significance of my days and nights and where they are taking me. The rush becomes a hush even if for only a few moments. The more we rush, the more we need the balance of the hush, the quieting down to evaluate where all the rush is taking us. From rush to hush.

Reflecting on my life is a positive good for me as a human being, even apart from the spiritual value such reflection can give. When my reflection takes place in the light of Jesus Christ, then it illumines the dark places I may have tried to avoid. The grace God offers in this enlightenment also encourages me to hope in the divine help available to me. Prayer touches me just where I am and reaches forward to what my life can become. Awareness of God shining through my existence awakens my perceptions and shows me where the will of God is leading me. I see how I have been made in God's image and how in Christ that image is being brought to perfection through all that happens.

We gather together often as Christians. Let's go back in time to other gatherings, to the people of Corinth who were addressed by St. Paul in words so powerful they still speak to us. "As for me, brothers and sisters," he says, " I came not with any show of oratory or philosophy, but simply to tell you what God had guaranteed." He says God comes with "a demonstration of the power of the Spirit" (1 Cor 2:4).

Prayer won't eliminate the problems in our lives, but it will bring to those problems a fresh understanding of what is taking place. It can help us to see them in a calmer appraisal of their causes and possible solutions. It can give us a strengthening to deal with them more effectively. We look at them with the eyes of Jesus Christ. Paul says, "We have a wisdom to offer those who have reached maturity, not a philosophy of our age...but the hidden wisdom of God." He calls it a "wisdom that God predestined to be for our glory before the ages began" (1 Cor 2:7). Paul is telling us how God is reaching out to us. God is inviting us to pray. It's an invitation that doesn't enrich God, but oh, how it enriches us.

It's an invitation which feeds us in a way that makes us say to ourselves: I did not know I was so hungry. It gives us spiritual nutrients and a taste of the things of God. This taste leads us away from the taste of worldly satisfactions that have been our

regular diet. In feeding on the things of God, we begin to see the world differently. We observe our world and all the creatures who are part of it in a new way. Paul says in the Epistle to the Romans, "What can be known about God is perfectly plain since God has made it plain. Ever since God created the world, God's everlasting power and deity—however invisible—have been there for the mind to see in the things God has made" (1: 19-20).

Yet for many people, a kind of secular blindness covers their eyes. It is a blindness encouraged by much of the media, by advertisers who stir up our desires, who parade before us a scene of indulgence that promises a hollow happiness. Just take out your credit card and all is yours—for awhile.

Let's listen again to Paul speaking to us as he spoke to the Corinthians, "Now instead of the spirit of the world, we have received the Spirit that comes from God, to teach us to understand the gifts that God has given us. Therefore we teach, not in the way in which philosophy is taught, but in the way that the Spirit teaches us. We teach spiritual things spiritually." And then he concludes, "One who is spiritual is able to judge the value of everything" (1 Cor 2:12-15).

Able to judge the value of everything. This is to make contact with the God Who puts our world and our place in that world into perspective. There are inescapable facts about human existence that believers and unbelievers agree upon. All who are living right now will in the future die. Everyone born today will be subject to ongoing change as he or she ages. Losses and gains are part of all human lives. Disease and disability threaten each one of us. Joy and celebration, pain and mourning---all are woven into the fabric of the advancing hours.

We concede--whether we are believers or agnostics or atheists—we concede the inescapability of the facts. But what a difference there is in how we respond to the inescapable facts. Do we have faith in a God Who watches over us every moment with overshadowing care? Or do we see ourselves part of an unfeeling universe where our puny little lives are simply inserted into an inevitable scheme of things? If we suffer, the answer of that unfeeling universe is "So what." Our agony means nothing in the larger picture of the unfeeling universe.

But if you believe in a God Who created all things in an outpouring of divine goodness, then all human experience is seen as supremely important to its Creator. Paul says, "Blessed be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, a gentle Father and the God of all consolation, who comforts us in our sorrows so we can offer others in their sorrows the consolation that we have received from God ourselves" (2 Cor: 1: 3-5).

Prayer takes us to our gentle Father, to our God of all consolation. Praying is loving attentiveness to such a Father. In that attentiveness, we begin to understand the depths of love which called us into being and which sustains us in our ongoing existence. We look upon one Who out of infinite concern is always looking at us. Our God never says to us, "So what."

How does quieting down your mind in prayer help you to deal with events in your life? Does praying give you hope, lessen anxiety? When an event takes place that gains special attention in your small world or in the wider world, do you recognize a difference in the way a committed Christian perceives it?

"Draw close to God and God will draw close to you" (Jas 4:8).

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