

Prayer and Interconnectedness

One of the values I have come to realize through my prayer life is the importance of human interconnectedness, described by St. Paul as the family, or body, of Christ. It is quite amazing when we realize how we are impacted by others, and how we can impact the lives of others, not only through the power of prayer, but also in everyday interaction with others. It is quite true that when one of us suffers, we all suffer to some degree, and when one of us is honored, we are all honored to some degree (1 Corinthians 12). This realization becomes very evident when we offer our prayers.

Our primary core vow is prayer. We may pray in different ways and at different times, and we often use different materials or tools when we pray. Sometimes we pray alone and sometimes we pray in groups. Sometimes we just sit and listen (which is more meditative or contemplative prayer), and other times our prayer is more vocal when we follow a specific prayer liturgy. Sometimes we sit still in prayer, and other times we move about (such as using the labyrinth, or nature walks, etc.).

The Book of Common Prayer says that prayer is responding to God, by thought and by deeds, with or without words. It adds that we can approach God using different prayer intentions such as adoration, praise, thanksgiving, penitence, oblation, intercession or petition.

Regardless of our methods or intentions used, prayer brings us into the Presence of God. Our own presence is united with God's Presence in harmony and unity in this sacred space. And when we enter into presence with Our Lord, we cannot help but be changed by it in some good way.

Let's look at how the practice of prayer changes us for the better. Often when we pray, we prepare ourselves for prayer and we enter a sacred space reserved for prayer. We may recite a psalm that reflects the struggles or joys that some man or woman had with life thousands of years ago, but that we still share today. We may read and reflect on the day's scripture reading that provides us with a wisdom teaching or story from history about how people interacted with God and each other – what worked and what didn't. We may profess our creed, which reinforces who we are as a Church family and what we believe in. We may offer up our names and the names of others from the prayer list, remembering that we and others in this world need help, or it may be to share in some gratitude around a joyous event. We may repeat the Lord's Prayer, which summarizes our human condition and the relationship we have with Our Creator, Teacher and Sustainer.

All of prayer is designed to remind us of our interconnectedness with God, other people and the natural world. It teaches us the power of our thoughts, words and deeds as we interact with others on a daily basis. Prayer time helps us to:

- celebrate and honor God's creation
- remember that God is love, intending to save us and not to condemn us
- affirms that God abides in us and we in God
- realize that we are, as St. Paul emphasizes, all *one* family, *one* body in Christ

- understand that when one of us is hurting or in need, we all hurt or are in need to some degree
- recognize that when one of us is honored, we are all honored to some degree
- awaken to the fact that we are all deeply connected with each other spiritually, mentally, and physically, through mind, body and spirit
- learn that because of this deep connectivity, what one person thinks, does or says affects others in some way at some time in the future
- surrender to the power and love of God, allowing our small ego-self to get smaller, and letting our true self emerge in Truth
- accept that God knows what we need before we even ask it, and that ultimately all will be well

God has the *greatest* power, and it is based on love. But God has also allowed room for mankind's free-will to impact the world. (Without free-will there can be no love.) We can make choices, for better or worse. What prayer time does for us is to help us grow and change in the right areas so that we use our power of choice in more loving ways, not only for ourselves, but for others as well.

The greatest power of prayer rests in its ability to change the one who prays.

When we leave our prayer session, we should be more deeply attuned to, and aware of, our interconnectedness with God, other people and the natural world. The interconnectivity being discussed here is a human network whose lifeblood is love. It moves and changes shape with the actions and words of the people within it, moment by moment. This is the living body of Christ in action.

If God abides in us and we in God, then we are instruments of change, not only change in ourselves, but in the world. This is where our life of mission and action plays a role. This is where we serve God in our own unique way, in a way that we were made using the gifts we were given.

We leave the prayer session with the faith that our thoughts, words and deeds will play some important role in God's overall plan in the day ahead. We may not see the impact or the results, but we need to have the assurance that somehow, at some point, what we think, do or say will shape the world in some important way according to God's standards. (We avoid judging what we do based on mankind's values and standards because that can get us off track very quickly.) We need to surrender to what God has in mind for us, accepting who and what we are, while at the same time looking for ways to make ourselves stronger in the face of life. Let us remember that we will be fulfilled when we do what needs to be done for God during any specific moment of the day, leaving the past to God's grace, and the future to God's providence. We can only live in the present moment, the NOW.

Our prayer session will change us little by little so that the words we say to others (and ourselves), the words we write to others in emails and notes, the gestures and smiles we use to interact with others, the thoughts we think about ourselves and others, and the things we choose to do in each

moment all contribute to a better world. It's so often that the little things – the smile, the handshake, the blessing, the flower –are what really have the greatest impact on the world.

Everything we think, do or say sets a loving energy in motion within the human network. It's like the ripples made by a pebble thrown into a still pond. We don't know what impact even the simplest act or word may have on the overall outcome of things. What you say or do for someone else this moment may reverberate from person to person and be the tipping point to some greatly needed change somewhere else in the world. It may simply make your day or someone else's day more joyful.

If everyone prayed with this in mind, what amazing changes there would be in the world!

We can't see the big picture as God can see it, so we have to trust that all will be well. But we can see what is happening around ourselves in each moment, and what we think, do or say creates some impact, somewhere. Our present moment is intrinsically connected to other moments in time, and to other people's lives in other places. We are not alone; we are not separated. The greatest power is in the simplest of thoughts, words and deeds. We are taught how *and why* to use right thoughts, words and deeds in God's love from the time we spend in prayer, in God's presence. This is one very important purpose of prayer.

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