

Devotion on Prayer - 23 April 2014, Anno Domini (Proclaiming the Acceptable Year of the Lord)



“Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.” (Luke 21:36)

THE COMMUNION OF PRAYER

Christians often get trapped in the ‘terms’ of worship to the detriment of their meaning. When we speak of Holy Communion, almost without exception, the Christian professor will think only of that outward form of the Sacrament conducted within the hallowed halls of the church building. They may not give much attention to that inward, spiritual grace that such Communion is intended to convey. Perhaps the leading cause is that the word Communion becomes simply an expression for an official performance and not of a heart-centered communication with the Lord. After all, the word ‘COMMUNION’ means to ‘communicate.’ If the communication is with our Lord, then it becomes a Holy Communion. Prayer, worship, hymn-singing, and service are all forms of the heart’s communication with God. Our Lord is strongly present where *“two or three are gathered together in my name,”* But He is always present as well with the individual believer. *“...Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”* (1 Chron 28:20) *“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”* (Heb 13:5)

There are many who receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion without holiness at all. They may receive it out of simply dutiful form, or with sin festering in their hearts. In such case, the Communion was not Holy for them. They take the Bread and the Wine to the detriment of their souls. The means of receiving the Sacrament would be prayerfully, contritely, and with no animosity in the heart. Prayer itself is a tremendous form of Communion, and it is also Holy when the Lord is the true object of it. When we enter the church doors for worship, we should do so reverently and quietly. If we intend to enter into the sanctuary in an irreverent manner, the other worshippers who wish to have Communion with God before the Sacrament will be disturbed in their prayers. We leave gossip and back-biting at our home altars when we leave for worship.

“More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.” Alfred Lord Tennyson, *Morte d’Arthur*. Many great gems of truth lie buried in the storied tales of old England. Some have come to seem so closely related to Holy Scripture that some mistake them for such. England was the first nation to be literally saturated with the Word of God in the native vernacular. It was also one of the first countries to own the

Holy Scriptures in the native language. The English language itself was refined and fashioned by the great translations of Tyndale, Wycliffe, and the translation committee appointed by King James.

This devotion is being written by request to address prayer – what is it, what form should it take, and how often should it be uttered.

Private and corporate prayer: There are two basic venues for prayer – 1) the prayers of the Prayer Book and of the Bible are corporate prayers. These prayers may be wafted on high by all present because they are Godly and not in the least prayers of controversy; and 2) private and personal prayers. These are prayers between a soul and his/her God. It is a direct communion with God. These prayers are not to be uttered standing in the public square, but in secret. God can hear a whisper as well as a shout. *“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.”* (Matt 6:6-8) If we are seriously praying to the King of Kings, of what need is there for the servants in His fields to be party to our petitions? The Lord’s Prayer is a corporate prayer to be uttered in unison. That is why it begins with “Our Father” and not “My Father.”

Pray as one who is watching and waiting upon the Lord: Peter, James, and John could not watch and pray with Christ, even at the critical hour of His Passion. God soldiers never leave the walls of their fortifications without a night watch. We are weak and vulnerable to the subtleties of the Adversary. We need Divine help and protection. *“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”* (Matt 26:41) We do not dominate the conversation with the Lord. We both speak and LISTEN. The Lord may provide an answer to our prayers which we do not hear for our long speaking.

Pray in simple faith: *“Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”* (Mark 11:22-24) This is one of the most difficult principles of prayer to explain than all others. The point missed by most wistful suppliants is this: when we pray with great faith, we will be praying righteously only for those things that accord with the Will of God to grant. If we have put on the Mind of Christ, we will only be mindful of those things of which Christ is mindful. *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:”* (Phil 2:5) You may desire a Porsche, or an ivory-towered mansion, but are these consistent with the desire of Christ? There are two reasons that prayers are not heard, or granted: 1) *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.”* (Psalms 66:18); and 2) *“If we pray out of the fleshly desires of our carnal natures, this is a nature at enmity with God. “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”* (James 4:3)

Pray with diligence and unceasing persistence: We should be as the widow who persistently petitions the dishonorable judge for justice until he relented and granted justice. Persistence in prayer reveals to God our sincerity and need. *“Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus*

concerning you." (1 Thess 5:17-18) How do we pray without ceasing? Simple, all that a Christian does or says should be in an attitude of prayer. Our lives truly should be a living prayer devoted to God.

Prayer abidingly in Christ: This principle is closely associated with "praying in simple faith" above. If we are abiding in Christ, our fruits will be His fruits. An apple is not self-made. It is produced by the tree from which it comes. If we are Christ's, the only part of us that is self-made is our sinful part. The good that a Christian does is not his own works, but those of our Lord working through our members. We are the branches of that fruitful Vine which is Christ. *"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."* (John 15:7-8) The purpose of the Vine and its branches is not to amass gold and silver, but to produce FRUIT worthy of our Lord's Table.

Pray with specificity: Don't blither along without any particular point, or points, when you pray. You were not ashamed to ask your father for an allowance; therefore, feel free to approach our Father in Heaven with your specific needs. *"Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit."* (James 5:17-18) I should add that Elijah's prayer was prayed from the authority of other prayers already offered. He had prayed for the Lord's will, and he was told. Now he prays that the Lord's will be performed – an easy prayer to pray.

Pray effectually: This means praying in the Love and understanding of the Holy Ghost. *"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."* (Jude 1:20-21) This also lines up with the previously mentioned prayer of Elijah. Remember, God is not an online order service. Our petitions MUST be consistent with His will to grant that petition. Perhaps the most commonly granted grace of God is that many of the prayers that we offered were not answered according to our desires but according to our needs.

Please read the prayer of a great Englishman. It is a model prayer of grace and compassion:

Prayer of Sir Francis Drake
'Logos of St Andrew - Dec 99

On the afternoon of the day that the English fleet sailed forth to meet the Spanish (Invincible) Armada, The Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Francis Drake, offered this prayer up to God for his men and himself. Note the tenor and charity of it:

Most merciful and loving Father, we beseech thee most humbly, even with all our hearts, to pour out upon our enemies with a bountiful hand whatsoever things thou knowest may do them good; and chiefly a sound and uncorrupt mind, wherethrough they may know thee and seek thee in true charity, with their whole hearts, and love us thy children, for thy sake. Let not their hating of us turn to their harm, neither let us in any wise hurt them. Seeing that we cannot do them good for want of ability, Lord, we desire their amendment, and not their punishment. Separate them not from us by punishing them, but join and knit them to us by thy favourable dealing with them. And seeing we be all ordained to be citizens of the one everlasting city, let us begin to enter

in that way here already by mutual love, which may bring us right forth hither; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. *Amen.*

Miraculously, the out-gunned and inferior British fleet was victorious over a naval force of unquestioned superiority. The forces of nature (and of nature's God) combined to deal a decisive defeat to the would-be invaders of England. Perhaps the only difference in the outcome was due to the prayer of Sir Francis Drake. What think ye?