
The usual movement of prayer is described in: 'Move from your head to your heart.' Whether it is reading Scripture or reciting prayers, the pattern is generally one of moving from thinking to feeling.

That is one reason why Jesus used parables, because a parable or a poem, like a piece of music or a work of art, can move you beyond the immediate meaning of the spoken word. The image of a grain of wheat falling into the earth and dying to produce a new crop is more moving than trying to state what it means. And that is what happens when we use art a means of finding the touch of God. You may find that you are put in touch with things that you were not aware of before.

A person may get in touch with a sorrow in their life and see it expressed in a colour, and then see another colour for the joy they have experienced or for any other different events or aspects of their life in so doing a person may become more deeply aware of the touch of God in their lives.

In using art as a spiritual exercise we are trying to come out of our heads and get in touch with our hidden selves, our real selves, so 'that our hidden self may grow strong so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith' (Ephesians 3:16). Strangely enough it is by getting absorbed in material things such as paint or clay, or physical movement such as dance, or by looking at nature we can be moved

beyond the external world into something far deeper, and that is where we find God. We can move beyond the limits that this world imposes, and it is by using the physical world which God has created that we transcend this creation As William Blake put it:

*To see a world in a grain of sand,
And a heaven in a wild flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour.*

To find God in this way; you don't need to be an artist or know anything about art. All that matters is to have a heart open to whatever the Lord might say to you and a readiness to accept that there are ways of praying very different from the way you were first taught. Taking time to look at a painting can be a most moving form of prayer, if you are looking for the touch of God.

One day when Sr Annie was leading a group of elderly nuns in the Tate Gallery and went ahead to decide what painting or sculpture they might look at, she came across *A Hopeless Dawn* by Frank Bramley, a painting of an elderly woman comforting a younger woman; the story behind it was that the husband of the younger woman who was the son of the older woman had been lost at sea. The window in the background opened on to a raging sea and on the table in the room was a candle alight next to a jug and a loaf and meal prepared. As Annie looked at it a group of students passed and discussed it but

did not get much from it. The elderly nuns who came with, her were moved, some quite deeply. Some in spite of the title saw an image of hope, some recalled an experience of God in great sorrow, some could identify with the older woman, some with the younger one, whilst others were moved though unable to say why. For all of them, without particularly saying they were searching for God, it became a prayer.

This way of praying can open our eyes to a new vision of God.

Prayer in itself is any activity which puts you more effectively under the influence of God.

*Taken from an article by
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