

Day 29

Alone with the Beloved: Contemplative Prayer



For Personal Reflection & Prayer

- Would I characterize my own prayer as a frequent sharing between friends? Which one of these words most describes my prayer (frequent, sharing, friends), and which least?
- Describe a time when prayer was an intense experience of being loved. How did that prayer transform your reactions to difficulties during daily life or some particularly challenging moment?

Take these considerations to the Lord in prayer, asking for light and strength.

Offer a prayer inspired by the words of Scripture:

*I seek him whom my heart loves.
Song of Songs 1:7*

*I know someone in Christ who, fourteen years ago
(whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows),
was caught up to the third heaven.
And I know that this person*

*(whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows)
was caught up into Paradise
and heard ineffable things, which no one may utter.*

Pope Benedict XVI on Contemplative Prayer

Prayer is not only the breath of the soul but, to make use of a metaphor, it is also the oasis of peace from which we can draw the water that nourishes our spiritual life and transforms our existence. God draws us towards him, offering us enlightenment and consolation, and enabling us to scale the mountain of holiness so that we may be ever closer to him.



This is the personal experience to which St Paul refers in Chapter 12 of his Second Letter to the Corinthians... In the face of those who contested the legitimacy of his apostolate he does not actually list the communities he has founded, the kilometres he has covered; he does not limit himself to recalling the difficulty and opposition he confronted in order to proclaim the Gospel; he points to his relationship with the Lord, a relationship so intense as also to be marked by moments of ecstasy, of profound contemplation (cf. 2 Cor 12:1)

With the language and ways of someone who is telling something that cannot be told, St Paul also speaks of that event in the third person. He says that a man was caught up into God's "garden", into Paradise. The Apostle's contemplation is so profound and so intense that he does not even remember the content of the revelation he received; yet he clearly remembers the date and the circumstances in which the Lord grasped him in such a complete way and attracted him to himself, just as he had on the road to Damascus at the time of his conversion... this attitude of profound humility and trust before God's manifestation of himself is also fundamental to our prayer and to our life, to our relationship with God and to our weaknesses.

The Apostle communicates to the Christians of Corinth and to us too that "this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison" (v. 17). In fact, humanly speaking the burden of his difficulties was not light, it was very heavy; but in comparison with God's love, with the greatness of being loved by God, it appears light, in the knowledge that the quantity of glory will be boundless. Therefore, to the extent that our union with the Lord increases and that our prayers become intense, we also go to the essential and understand that it is not the power of our own means, our virtues, our skills that brings about the Kingdom of God but that it is God who works miracles precisely through our weakness, our inadequacy for the task. We must therefore have the humility not to trust merely in ourselves, but to work, with the Lord's help...

Contemplating the Lord is at the same time both fascinating and awe-inspiring: fascinating because he draws us to him and enraptures our hearts by uplifting them, carrying them to his heights where we experience the peace and beauty of his love; awe-inspiring because he lays bare our human weakness, our inadequacy, the effort to triumph over the Evil One who endangers our life, that thorn embedded also in our flesh. In prayer, in the daily contemplation of the Lord, we receive the strength of God's love and feel that St Paul's words to the Christians of Rome are true, when he wrote: "For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:38-39).



In a world in which we risk relying solely on the efficiency and power of human means, we are called to rediscover and to witness to the power of God which is communicated in prayer, with which every day we grow in conforming our life to that of Christ, who — as Paul says — “was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we are weak in him, but in dealing with you we shall live with him by the power of God” (2 Cor 13:4).

https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20120613.html

