

LET THE SPIRIT BREATHE . . .



“MY KINGDOM IS WITHIN YOU . . . LUKE 17:21

Dweller of my soul, help me to still my mind, my senses from exterior things and recall that you dwell within, waiting to bless me and gift me with your grace. Amen

This month . . . Reflections on ✧ Prayer of Recollection ✧

PRAYER OF RECOLLECTION, sometimes called the prayer of simplicity, is a prayer in which we focus our mind and will on God. The foundation of the Prayer of Recollection is to know the Divine presence in our souls, recognizing “in Him [Christ] we live, move and have our being”. (Acts 17:28)

Through the prayer of recollection we come to know these truths: God is within us, we are his dwelling place, we are beloved. Through this prayer we come to remember these truths and to unite ourselves with God.

“Recollection” is a noun of action, literally meaning to recall or to remember. God says, “Be still and know that I am God!” (Psalms 46:10) In prayer of recollection we recall who God is and who we are in relation to him. We affirm our souls identity is in Christ. It is through this prayer we prepare ourselves to encounter God, to receive his word, to meet Him in truth, separating ourselves from our personal idolatries in the presence of His love.

In this prayer of recalling our souls back to God there is no set formula. Prayer of Recollection involves our efforts, aided by the grace of the Divine. This prayer reveals what direction our lives are going and what distracts us; “for where your treasure is, there is your heart.” Matthew 6:21. Distractions that come during our time of prayer will ultimately become our gifts as we become aware of what diverts us from uniting with God. Having this awareness now allows the Spirit to guide us in growth and transformation.

A Gift of Our Heart: Stillness and Attention

“The point is we should make a gift of our hearts, emptying them of ourselves that they may be filled with God. Our almighty Father becomes one with us and transforms us, uniting Creator and creature. How desirable is this union!”
Teresa of Avila

In the prayer of recollection we can let the words of Teresa of Avila guide us as we prepare ourselves for prayer: We make a gift of our hearts . . . We empty ourselves. “Be still and know . . .” In our stillness we try to let go of our distractions. In stillness we let God startle our soul with his companioning love in our desires to come into his presence. In attentiveness we acknowledge the sovereignty of God, the “I am that I am”. As we pray we will undoubtedly experience some distractions. It is also our attentiveness to these distractions that enable us to see what is in residence in our hearts and lives, demanding our attention and our energy. We acknowledge these distractions for it is so much easier to receive from Christ when we are honest, open, and humble about our life.

Exercise:

1. Come to Him: In a quiet setting, calm yourself, your anxieties. (Matthew 6:31-34) Envision Christ with you. Give thanks for this moment.
2. Confess to Him: Lift up your scattered thoughts with a simple prayer. “Lord, I am so easily distracted but my deepest desire is to dwell in you. I give you those things in my life that would separate me from you and hinder me from hearing you.”
3. Celebrate with Him: Celebrate your identity in Him. “God, I am beloved, forgiven, totally accepted, pleasing, and complete in Christ. Enable me to listen, to hear you speak.”

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Harriet White, Evangelist

A Friends Prayer of Recollection

Often we may have prayed a prayer of recollection without knowing its assigned name. Perhaps, named or unnamed we grow into this prayer as the nature of our prayer life and journey with Christ deepen. This was so with my friend.

A friend shared that on a spiritual pilgrimage to a retreat center she went to her room upon arriving to settle in. In her room she took a few moments before supper to pray, focusing on her week ahead. She quieted herself, giving thanks for her journey, setting aside the concerns of the outside world. "This week I want to dwell in You" she prayed, adding, "My deepest desire is to give my life unconditionally to you, Lord." She then sat quietly, attentively listening to what the Holy Spirit might share. Being a visual person, my friend was not surprised when an image of Christ came to her mind. She noticed his eyes, full of love, compassion and grace. No words were spoken, just this wondrous image of Christ.

The following day while on a walk, she was brought up short as she remembered her prayer from the previous evening. She realized her words in that prayer were easily spoken but in reality were far from unconditional. Bottom line was she wanted assurance from God of safety and security for her family. She told me she stood on a hill overlooking the countryside saying to God, "You know I want to place you first in my life but I want my family to be safe, our life to be secure." She stood quietly, processing the reality of her previous prayer and her newly discovered dilemma. The whole world, she said, seem to hold its breath, time standing still, awaiting the decision of who would be Lord of her life; God or conditions and worry. "God", she said, "as much as I want the assurance of security and safety, I choose you to be the center of my life, to trust and know, in faith, you will provide for my needs for whatever may come in the future. I give myself to you." At that moment, she felt an immediate sense of freedom of spirit and the image of Christ she had experienced the evening before came once again to her mind, his eyes filled with love, compassion and grace. However, this time words accompanied the visual . . . "I have been waiting for you."

Reflection moment . . .

"To enter the Prayer of Recollection we have to stop trying to think, and to just wait for God to bring us in. Waiting with patience, listening for an answer. We can't achieve the Prayer of Recollection, but God can grant it to us." Teresa of Avila, The Interior Castle



IN THE GARDEN . . .

The flower symbolism associated with the violet is humility, devotion, faithfulness, forgiveness. These are attributes we bring to the prayer of recollection.



Moment of Meditation

"O soul, most beautiful of all creatures," exclaims St John of the Cross, "to know the place where your Beloved is, in order to seek Him and be united with Him... It is a matter of great contentment and joy for you to see that He is so near you as to be within you. Rejoice and be glad in your inward recollection with Him, since you have Him so near. There desire Him, there adore Him, and do not go to seek Him outside yourself."

"You, my Dwelling Place, have created my inner self into a sanctuary of love. I carry splendor and goodness with every step, with every breath, with every word, with every act. What an honor it is to contain you, the Holy One."

From "Fragments of Your Ancient Name" by Joyce Rupp, Daily Meditation December 12.

Scripture focus:

"I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." Ephesians 3:16-19 NIV

"For in him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'" Acts 17:28 NIV

"Return, O my soul, to your rest, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you." Psalms 116:7 NRSV

"Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be." Matthew 6:21 NIV