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Center for Spiritual Development

Daily Reflections

JOURNEYING THROUGH CHRISTMAS

Photo by Sr. Karin Nürnberg

REFLECTING ON PRAYER

By Julie Mussché

"To pray is to dream in league with God."

ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL

The Way Into Jewish Prayer

Reflection

Folks enter into spiritual direction for any number of reasons. One request frequently expressed by the people I companion is the desire to strengthen their prayer practice. In many cases, this entails intentionally carving out time to pray or trying out different prayer practices to see what sticks or inspires. In today's virtual world, the options are numerous, from prayer groups, to podcasts, and social networks. Where to begin? Is this perhaps one of your New Year's resolutions? Here are a few things to ponder.

What is the meaning of prayer to you? This question assumes a layered and complex response. Is it praise or worship of God? Does it mean being present

to or just being with God? Is it one or two-way conversation? Is it communal or private? What is it to you?

Where do you like to pray? What is your geography of prayer, your sacred space? A church, in nature, in the privacy of your home, while driving your car, where is the place that inspires you and opens your heart to God?

How much time do you have available to dedicate to intentional prayer? Are you amenable to “praying as you go”? How is your prayer life contained or expanded by time and space?

How do you like to pray? Again, the assumption with this question is that prayer can take many forms and is not restricted to a style or form. This might include a variety of things such as praying the Rosary, devotions, centering prayer, walking contemplation, journaling, artistic endeavors, liturgy, music. Take some time to explore your preferences.

Lastly, how has God invited you to be in communion and conversation? What is your desire? “Prayer is more than paying attention to the holy. Prayer comes about as an event. It consists of two inner acts: an act of turning and an act of direction. I leave the world behind as well as all interests of the self. Divested of all concerns, I am overwhelmed by only one desire: to place my heart upon the altar of God” (Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*).



Photo by Taylor Wright from Unsplash

For Prayer

*Praise the Lord from the heavens;
praise him in the heights!*

*Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his hosts!*

*Praise him, sun and moon,
praise him, all you shining stars!*

*Praise him, you highest heavens,
and you waters above the heavens!*

*Let them praise the name of the Lord!
For he commanded and they were created.*

*And he established them forever and ever;
he gave a decree, and it shall not pass away.*

*Praise the Lord from the earth,
you great sea creatures and all deeps,*

*fire and hail, snow and mist,
stormy wind fulfilling his word!*

*Mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars!*

*Beasts and all livestock,
creeping things and flying birds!*

*Kings of the earth and all peoples,
princes and all rulers of the earth!*

*Young men and maidens together,
old men and children!*

*Let them praise the name of the Lord,
for his name alone is exalted;
his majesty is above earth and heaven.*

*He has raised up a horn for his people,
praise for all his saints,
for the people of Israel who are near to him.*

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