

**No.21.**

**18th February 2021**

Dear Friends,

This week our extract from Ronald Rolheiser's book on Prayer looks at how we do not always find prayer easy or rivetting - it comes and goes - just like life in general, but we need to persevere.

John Kimberley reminds us of a particularly powerful piece/poem from the grim days of Nazi history from which we can learn lessons for today.

Bishop Barron invites us never to think we are too bad to approach our Blessed Lord. He also brings out curious parallels between customs and laws in ancient Israel and our own world and culture today.

Take care and God bless,

John de Waal.

## **Struggling with boredom in Prayer. by Fr Ronald Rolheiser.**

“Prayer has a huge ebb and flow. When we try to pray, sometimes we walk on water and sometimes we sink like a stone. Sometimes we have a deep sense of God’s reality and sometimes we can’t even imagine that God exists. Sometimes we have deep feelings about God’s goodness and love, and sometimes we feel only boredom and distraction. Sometimes our eyes fill with tears and we wish we could stay in our prayer-place forever, and sometimes our eyes wander furtively to our wristwatches to see how much time we still need to spend in prayer.

Here’s an analogy that might encourage you when you are struggling with boredom and the sense that nothing meaningful is happening : I imagine you have an aged mother who is confined to a nursing home. You are a dutiful child and, every night after work, for one hour, you stop and spend time with her, helping her with her evening meal, sharing the events of the day, and simply being with her as her daughter or son. I doubt that , save for a rare occasion, you will have many deeply emotive or even interesting conversations with her. On the surface your visits will seem mostly routine and dry. Most times you will talk about trivial, everyday things....Given that you are busy and preoccupied with many pressures in your own life, it is natural that you will sneak the occasional glance at your watch.

But if you persevere in these regular visits with your mother, month after month, year after year, among everyone in the whole world, you will grow to know your mother most deeply and she will grow to know you most deeply. That’s because at a deep level of relationship, the real connection between us takes place below the surface of our conversations. We begin to know each other through simple presence.

Prayer is the same. If we pray faithfully every day, year in and year out, we can expect little excitement, lots of boredom, and regular temptations to look at the clock. But a bond and an intimacy will be growing under the surface : a deep, growing bond with our God.”

(From : “Prayer : Our Deepest Longing, by Ronald Rolheiser).

## **A Thought for the Day**

**- or rather a Thought for Every Day! by John Kimberley.**

The other day I re-discovered the following poem. It has a powerful message which is so easy to understand and needs no explanation at all. It reminds very strongly that we have to be involved in life and witness to the truth.

They came first for the Communists,  
But I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist.  
Then they came for the Jews,  
and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew.  
Then they came for the trade unionists,  
and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist.  
Then they came for the Catholics,  
and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant.  
Then they came for me,  
and by that time no one was left to speak up.

Pastor Martin Niemoller was born in Lippstadt, Germany and had a full life as a submarine commander in the First World War. As the title of his memoirs tells us he moved "From U-Boat to Pulpit", and from the pulpit he was outspoken in his opposition to Hitler and the Nazi Party. This led him to spending over seven years in concentration camps such as Sachsenhausen and Dachau. After the Second World War he continued as a Christian Pastor and became a renowned theologian.

## **Bishop Robert Barron's Sunday Sermon.**

To prepare well for this sermon you may like to look at the first reading for the 6th Sunday of the Year : Leviticus : 1-2,44-46; and St Mark's Gospel, 1:40-45. It is a moving and fascinating look at how we should never be afraid to approach Jesus to seek healing.

<https://youtu.be/Eh2otY27BCo>

**Final Prayer** - taken from Compline (the Night Prayer of the Church).

**Antiphon.** Save us, Lord, while we are awake; protect us while we sleep; that we may keep watch with Christ and rest with him in peace.

### **Nunc Dimittis.**

At last, all-powerful Master,  
you give leave to your servant  
to go in peace, according to your promise.

For my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared for all nations, the light to enlighten the Gentiles and give glory to Israel, your people.

**Antiphon.** Save us, Lord, while we are awake; protect us while we sleep; that we may keep watch with Christ and rest with him in peace.

A short time for silent prayer.

### **Concluding prayer.**

Lord our God,  
restore us again by the repose of sleep after the fatigue of our daily work;  
so that, continually renewed by your help, we may serve you in body and soul.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen

**Blessing.** Lord, grant us a quiet night and a perfect end. Amen.

### **A final thought.**

“Evil triumphs when good men do nothing.”  
(Edmund Burke).