

No.22.

25th February 2021

Dear Friends,

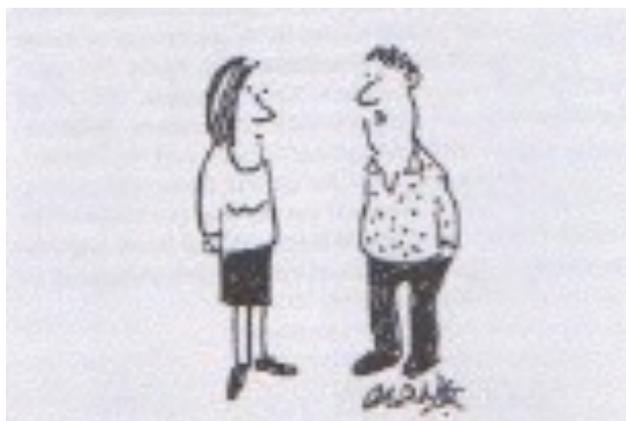
As we begin the season of Lent we are reminded of the three Lenten practices of Prayer, Abstinence and Alms Giving. In these newsletters we have already been concentrating on Prayer so, in a sense, we have a head start! Prayer is ultimately about our loving relationship with God - and today Fr Ronald Rolheiser gets to the “heart of the matter” in this regard.

I have chosen as our prayer this week one of the psalms which reminds us of the joy and love we are seeking in our relationship with God.

Bishop Barron gives us wonderful ideas as to how we can experience a good Lent. He reminds us that it is so sad to reach Easter and realise that Lent has come and gone without our making any special effort. I recall a sermon many years ago in which the priest at Mass started his sermon at the beginning of Lent by saying that this Lent could be our last! It was a thought which should stop us in our tracks. If we take notice of Bishop Barron’s suggestions then, please God, we should not arrive at Easter with a sense of regret at chances missed.

Take care and God bless,

John de Waal.



If I was enjoying anything, I could give it up for Lent!

Being Bold in Prayer. by Ronald Rolheiser.

The classic definition of prayer tells us that prayer is the raising of the heart and mind to God. In essence, that says it all. The problem is that we often raise our minds but not always our hearts. Our prayer tends to be intellectual but not 'affective' and we tend to think of prayer more as a way of gaining insight than as a way of being touched in the heart.

But ultimately, prayer is about love. It is meant to establish friendship. Friendship, as we know, is not just a question of having insight into each other's lives as it is of mutually touching each other in affection and understanding. Friendship, as St John of the Cross puts it, is a question of attaining "boldness with each other." When we have touched each other's lives deeply, we can be bold with each other. We can then ask each other for help, ask each other to be present without needing an excuse, or share our deepest feelings. Good friendship inspires boldness.

The object of prayer is precisely to try to attain this kind of "boldness" with God, to try to reach a point where we are comfortable enough with God to ask for help, just as we would a trusted friend. But to reach this kind of trust we must first let God touch us in the heart, and not just in insight. This means prayer is not so much a question of having beautiful thoughts about God as it is of feeling God's affection for us. Sadly, that is what we generally miss in prayer : the experience of God's affection.

What is common in prayer is the tendency to talk to ourselves rather than to God. For example : when we are at prayer and we begin to have various feelings and insights, the almost automatic reaction is to begin to speak to ourselves about what's happening in us.

This point was clarified for me recently on a retreat. The retreat director suggested that perhaps the number-one problem in prayer is the tendency to constantly talk to ourselves, not to God. He suggested that too often in prayer we say things to ourselves that we should be saying to God. The key to prayer, in his view, is to turn from ourselves to God.

And the pivotal part of that turning is that we must ask God to touch us affectively and not just intellectually. When we go to pray, what we most need to ask for is to hear God's voice within us saying : "I love you!" Nothing will heal us more and nothing will make us more bold before life's mystery and good-

ness than hearing those words from God. Our very capacity to love depends on it.

Prayer is meant to be a mutual thing, it is important that we respond in kind. Part of affective prayer is that we, too, one to one, with affection say the same thing to God : "I love you!" In all long-term affectionate relationships the partners occasionally have to prompt each other to hear expressions of affection and reassurance. The relationship of prayer is no different.

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

A Prayer of Happiness and Peace.

Preserve me God, I take refuge in you.
I say to the Lord : "You are my God.
My happiness lies in you alone."

O Lord, it is you who are my portion and cup;
it is you yourself who are my prize.
The lot marked out for me is my delight:
welcome indeed the heritage that falls to me!

I will bless the Lord who gives me counsel,
who even at night directs my heart.
I keep the Lord ever in my sight;
since he is at my right hand, I shall stand firm.

And so my heart rejoices, my soul is glad;
even my body shall rest in safety.
You will show me the path of life,
the fulness of joy in your presence,
at your right hand happiness for ever.

(from Psalm 15).

Bishop Robert Barron's Sunday Sermon.

This week's Sunday Sermon looks at the Holy Season of Lent - one of the most important in the Church's year. What should you do - can you do - as a Lenten practice? Bishop Barron challenges us with very practical suggestions.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ezZxL5xoEq8>

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.

"Almighty and eternal God, you created mankind so that all might long to
find you and have peace when you are found."

(prayer on Good Friday).