

Pray Always ~ Midweek Reflection # 48, May 13, 2009

“The Promise of Day-to-Day Prayer”

“As one day succeeds another, we must inscribe in each of them the presence of God and our attention to Him, for as long as we live... That is why it is important to pray every day, when we wake up and when we go to bed, with whatever aids are necessary, so that our lives can realize their potential beauty, and so that we can live them with the assurance of faith, the peace of love, and the joy of hope which dwell in the Christian heart.” ~ Jean-Marie Lustiger, dust jacket of First Steps In Prayer

I came across this delightful and helpful book last Saturday in a used book store. It's a collection of sixteen thoughtful essays first given as radio talks by the Cardinal-Archbishop of Paris in the 1980s that present prayer as an accessible way of life. I have found it very helpful in refocusing my heart and mind on finding space for God in the rhythm of my daily life and enjoying God's presence through intentional prayer.

Pray always and do not lose heart. Jesus to his disciples, Luke 18:1

“We must pray every day, I repeat, every day. Why? Because we are made that way. We are beings shaped by God from the dust of our earth. Think for example, of the problems that arise for the human psyche when a person begins to tear himself away from his earthly environment by space flights and moon landings. Regardless of his environment, a person has to keep to his innate biological rhythm, a rhythm that connects him with the earth and all living creatures on it. The first chapter of Genesis reminds us: There are days and nights, evenings and mornings. Our lives take place in time. Freedom, our most beautiful and highest faculty, allied with our intelligence and our capacities for willing and loving, the fine point of our being which turns toward God, is, nevertheless, exercised in our lifetimes. It is the freedom given to creatures of flesh and blood who are called from day to day to live from the present moment in the eternity of God.

Thus, when a person commits his life to God, he must recommit it each day. You all know the request in the Lord's Prayer; ‘Give us this day our daily bread.’ No matter how the phrase is interpreted, the emphasis remains on ‘this day.’ Jesus, just as the prophets and men of God before him, asks us to measure the duration of our existence from day to day, by the new day that succeeds the one just finishing, from the beginning to the end of our lives. It is within our days that our lives and our freedom are inscribed.

To offer our lives to God each day means accepting each day as a gift from God, and giving it back to him in a prayer of thanksgiving, blessing, praise, and supplication. In short, we are to speak to God just as a son speaks to a father who he knows loves him; or according to Ignatius of Loyola. 'as a friend speaks to a friend' (Spiritual Exercises, No. 54 ).”

First Steps In Prayer, Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, Doubleday, New York, 1987

Originally published in French under the title *Premiers Pas Dans La Priere*, 1986 Nouvelle Cite, Paris, translated by Rebecca Howell Balinski

Jean-Marie Lustiger has a refreshingly simple way of inviting the serious Christian to engage in a great variety of prayers using scripture and the liturgy of the Church throughout the days and nights of our lives as a way of keeping our attention on the God who made us and loves us. Always initiated by God, our prayers are simply the response of a grateful heart to our caring Abba which help us sustain the gift of life rooted in eternity and lived in the light of God's presence!

I am sure i will be sharing more of Jean-Marie's thoughts on prayer in the weeks to come.

Under God's Mercy,

Howie