Additional Questions, Resources, Etc. for the Episode

9. Prayer

Springfield Catholicism Project

**The Fire of His Love: Prayer and the Life of the Spirit**

**Episode focus** – on Christian spirituality by telling the stories of Catholics: Thomas Merton, St. Theresa of Avila, and St. John of the Cross.

**BASIC RESOURCES FOR THIS EPISODE:**

- **Journal Book** containing the first round of questions with related web links, glossary, connections for additional diocesan help, links for further study, and a short prayer; and the
- **Prayer Book** containing a copyright free Opening Prayer for this episode of song, reading, and prayer.

**MORE QUESTIONS:**

7. When has God begun to “pull and tug” at me during prayer? How am I changed because of this?

8. St. Thomas Aquinas said: we tend to fill infinite caverns of life with the wrong things. How has prayer helped me fill my life with right things?

9. Every single episode of the first half of the Catholicism Series mentioned Christian non-violence. This ninth episode mentions that “contemplation is the reconfiguring of life around the divine reality of being here and now created” by God. Here then is the indispensible link between the complex elements of the Christian life: God is love → God sustains creation continually in love → I am created in God’s image and likeness → I “get” this profound reality only via a commitment to contemplation. What is my level of dedication to contemplation / prayer / mediation? Does my participation in non-violence correspond to my participation in contemplation or vice versa?
A CENTRAL THEME FOR IN-DEPTH WORK:
Father Barron describes prayer as “communion with God” and points out that the reason we often feel so restless is that we try to satisfy this longing for God with the passing things of this world. This, he says, prevents us from communion with God in two ways: either we fall into addictions as we consume more and more of the finite goods of this earth in an attempt to satisfy our longing for God or we numb ourselves to our need for communion with God through incessant noise and distraction.

1. Would I agree that prayer is “communion with God” and where in my life is there time scheduled to quiet myself in preparation for this desired communion with God?

2. What things in my life am I using in an attempt to fill my longing for God?

3. In what ways are the busyness and distractions of my life preventing me from responding to my deep need for communion with God?

MORE LINKS TO RELATED BARRON MATERIAL:
-- none noted --

OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS AND BOOKS ON PRAYER:


- The spiritual life is fed by Liturgy as well as by personal prayer and popular devotions:

12. The spiritual life, however, is not limited solely to participation in the liturgy. Christians are indeed called to pray in union with each other, but they must also enter into their chamber to pray to the Father in secret; further, according to the teaching of the Apostle, they should pray without ceasing. We learn from the same Apostle that we must always bear about in our body the dying of Jesus, so that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodily frame. This is why we ask the Lord in the sacrifice of the Mass that “receiving the offering of the spiritual victim,” he may fashion us for himself “as an eternal gift.”

13. Popular devotions of the Christian people are to be highly endorsed, provided they accord with the laws and norms of the Church, above all when they are ordered by the Apostolic See. Devotions proper to particular Churches also have a special dignity if they are undertaken by mandate of the bishops according to customs or books lawfully approved. But these devotions should be so fashioned that they harmonize with the liturgical seasons, accord with the sacred liturgy, are in some way derived from it, and lead the people to it, since, in fact, the liturgy, by its very nature far surpasses any of them.

- Prayers, litanies, invocations, and concessions from the treasury of the Church
Washington, USCCB.
- A book for personal, family, and small group use
  - The Daily Blessings
  - Days and Seasons
  - Times in Life: Blessings of Family Members
  - Blessings for Various Times and Places
  - Common Prayers
  - Basic Prayers
  - Daily Prayers
  - Days and Seasons
  - Family Prayers from Birth to Death
  - Prayers for Catholic Living
  - Prayers for the Church and the World
  - Litanies
  - God’s Word in Times of Need
  - Stations of the Cross
  - Calendar of the Saints
Detailed Table of Contents: [http://www.usccbpublishing.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=764](http://www.usccbpublishing.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=764)

**OTHER LINKS:**


Reason for this work is stated in no. 1: In accordance with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, this Congregation, in furthering and promoting the Liturgy, “the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed…and the fount from which all her power flows”, wishes to draw attention to the need to ensure that other forms of piety among the Christian people are not overlooked, nor their useful contribution to living in unity with Christ, in the Church, be forgotten.

Francis Thompson, “The Hound of Heaven”:
Read by Richard Burton [7:59]: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gToj6SLWz8Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gToj6SLWz8Q)
UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CATECHISM FOR ADULTS:
This catechism addresses the many forms of prayer in these chapters and provides references after the heading to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC] for related information:

14. The Celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ – pp. 165-179
   CCC, nos. 1076-1209
22. Sacramentals and Popular Devotions – pp. 293-303
   CCC, nos. 1667-1679
35. God Calls Us to Pray – pp. 462-480
   CCC, nos. 2558-2758
36. Jesus Taught Us to Pray – pp. 481-502
   CCC, nos. 2759-2865

OTHER:

Other Books:


St. Teresa of Jesus, Virgin and Doctor of the Church, Memorial – 15 October
aka St. Teresa of Avila

**Bookmark Prayer**

Let nothing disturb you.
Let nothing make you afraid.
All things are passing.
God alone never changes.
Patience gains all things.
If you have God you will want for nothing.
God alone suffices.

Matthew 7:7-12 – On the importance of prayer

- Gospel for Thursday of the First Week of Lent

**Thomas Merton, OCSO (1915-1968)**, a Trappist monk of the Abbey of Gethsemani KY, a writer of more than 70 books, including his best-selling autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (1948).

In Chapter 9 of *Catholicism*, Father Barron writes about Thomas Merton, contemplation, and a fundamental option for non-violence:
[Thomas Merton] characterized contemplative prayer as “finding that place in you where you are here and now being created by God.” That magnificent description was born of Merton’s discovery, many years before, of Gilson’s notion of the divine aseity. If God is that which exists through the power of his own essence, then, as we have seen in chapter three, whatever else exists must come forth in its totality from the creative power of God. Creation, then, is not only an event “at the beginning of time”; it is something happening right now. To pray contemplatively is to find the place at the very bottom of one’s being – the point vierge, the interior castle, the inner wine cellar – where God’s life and love are sustaining you in existence. Once the center is found, everything else changes. When we find that place, we necessarily find that which connects us to everyone else and everything else in the cosmos.

This helps to explain why Merton wrote so energetically about nonviolence in the 1960s. Some see this as a surrender to trendiness on Merton’s part and an abandonment of the more classically Catholic spirituality he espoused earlier in his life, but I believe that this is a superficial reading. In speaking incisively against atomic weapons and against the war in Vietnam, Merton was drawing practical moral conclusions from creation metaphysics and from the contemplative prayer that gave him access to the divine center. Merton consistently denied that he was a strict pacifist in the manner of Francis of Assisi or Dorothy Day; he insisted that practitioners of the Catholic spiritual tradition, adepts of contemplation, should always exercise a fundamental option for nonviolence, for their prayer must teach them that all people, despite whatever political or cultural conflicts might divide them, always remain, at the deepest level, siblings.

On March 18, 1958, Merton was in Louisville for some practical business and found himself at the corner of Fourth and Walnut Street in the heart of the shopping district. In that ordinary place he had an experience in some ways as extraordinary as Teresa of Avila’s encounter with the angel: “I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. It was like waking from a dream of separateness.”

Galatians 5:16-25 – Pentecost Sunday, Alternate Second Reading, Year B

Brothers and sisters, live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh. For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want. But if you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, lust, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.
Against such there is no law.
Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their flesh
with its passions and desires.
If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit

Extra Resources from the Office for Worship and the Catechumenate:
1. Handout – Breathing and the Spirit of God
2. Handout – Ongoing Faith Formation, Sunday, and the Liturgical Year
3. Handout – Sunday: The Heart of the Week

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