

Sr. Margaret Dorgan's Weekly

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Prayer is Any Time

Prayer isn't something you have to travel long distances to find or go through some rigorous process to achieve. It's not an uphill struggle, with yourself panting and drenched with perspiration from the exertion. Prayer is much more simple, much more accessible. You just have to reach down within yourself.

It's like a rhythm that's going on all the time, deep in your interior, but you sink into the depths to find it. Or it's like a song that's being sung continually, but who is listening? Just pausing to listen you can hear it and it's the song of Jesus, the Word of God singing in you.

Going deep within is going to where you want to be, because it's only in that profound level that your life finds vital meaning. The surface things, the action things---attending this meeting, and voting on that committee or even visiting someone to comfort and console---all these have meaning if they relate to the depths of your being because it's down there that meaning exists in the rhythm of reality--- the rhythm of breathing in God and breathing out God. If somehow we don't breathe in God and breathe out God in what we do, we shortchange ourselves and the people we're involved with. Lots of experts have more know-how than we have in handling social problems, educational problems, economic problems. But breathing in God and breathing out God to others---this is my assignment in my particular human nature and it should be my field of focus.

Many approaches are being taken today in regard to prayer. These meditation practices are helpful. It's impressive that we in the western world are turning our attention to the treasures to be found in Zen and Yoga. But something nudges me here. We Christians are like miners who have been handed free-of charge rights to a mine of diamonds. All we have to do is dig in. But we're heard of gold in other hills and off we go to mine the gold of Zen and the gold of Yoga. I'm not saying we shouldn't go to those hills to get gold. But what about the diamonds in our own Christian mine? How many of us read the Christian saints who speak to us as our own brothers and sisters? They invite us to rejoice with them and to ponder what Jesus has given them and they pass on to us.

As a kind of symbol of what prayer is all about, I'd like to take our rescued Catahoula hound, Deirdre. I don't think this is irreverent, since God did a great work in creating Deirdre. Now, I've never been able to detect any real prayer in her. In fact, whenever we gather together to pray, Deirdre walks out on us. She knows all the signals and says to herself: this is not for me. She goes to sleep. Still, I say Deirdre is a good symbol for prayer. And this is how.

She's very much geared to the present instant and throws herself into it with absolute relish, wringing out of it every atom of joy it can possibly contain. She inhabits her canine world with zest. She expects the best from it and is wholly alert

to the positive qualities of experience. Deirdre lives with enthusiasm, a great tribute to her Maker. Someone said of Deirdre: "I never saw a dog with such a high opinion of herself." That's a good basic ingredient for prayer: be happy with yourself. Forget all the guilt for these moments as you rejoice that God is God and you are you.

Deirdre is very spontaneous, although she does have a sense that maybe you have some special rules she'd better obey. Spontaneity with God is something we're too rarely urged to have. No one has ever prayed like *you* before. If you can sink deeper into prayer by a walk in the woods or by floating on your back in the water or by being perched on a tractor as you mow hour after hour in a hay field, who can say to you that a quiet room is better? Prayer is for everywhere. You are the pray-er; and you don't restrict yourself to a place or to a posture like kneeling. Let prayer envelop you in all you do.

Deirdre conveys what it is to be a free spirit, finding delight in open spaces and hidden corners. Oh, how free she is! Some folks say she's too exuberant, but I like to think she's wonderfully, idiotically, breezily free. Maybe they're jealous.

With the Psalmist, let us sing to God as we admire all His creatures, **"You open Your hand and satisfy every living thing"** (Ps 145:16).

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