

Covenant of Love

Group Outlines from Schoenstatt

Prayer Makes a Difference # 14

Prayer Makes A Difference

Sometimes, we associate prayer with desperation. Prayer is often reserved for moments of crisis when we are at the end, and have no strength left. Desperate people pray. When we reach the limit of our own resources, we pray almost instinctively: Conflict in the family, illness, worries for ourselves and others. Praying in a crisis is not a bad thing at all. Desperation prayers have often been the beginning of a deep and new spiritual life for some people. We have just got to watch that we don't fall into a pattern, where the only times we pray are the times when we are hurt by cross or pain, and the rest of the time we rely on our own strength and cleverness. The kiss of death to prayer is if you believe that everything would happen exactly as it does regardless of whether we pray or not. This suspicion is a kind of ghostly shadow that haunts the minds of those who sincerely want to pray. Does prayer change things? Does my personal prayer change things?

The beginning of the answer to this question lies in the Book of Revelation in the Bible. In the eighth Chapter there is a part where St. John describes a scene in heaven where the seals have been broken on the scrolls that tell the story of human sin and God's judgement. Then a remarkable thing happens: John writes that "there was silence in heaven for about half-an-hour, during this time an angel came with incense which contained the prayers arising from earth". Heaven comes to a standstill. Our prayers interrupt heaven. The endless songs and praise of heavenly hosts suddenly stop. Why? Because someone is praying. Prayers are heard. Prayers matter. Prayers of real human beings – like you and me – interrupt heaven. *The person who changes history in a creative way, is the person who prays.*

Our Catholic understanding is the biblical understanding – prayer changes things. However, prayer is learned behaviour. Nobody is born an expert at it. We will always be beginners in one way or another.

Prayer is a great privilege in our lives. It's not something we have to do; it is something we get to do. Through prayer we actually enter into the awesome presence of God. Let's set the record straight about prayer:

1. *Prayer is easy!* When we pray, the simpler our prayers are, the better. We should approach God with childlike simplicity and faith. It should be as natural as breathing. Your body can't live without breathing, your soul can't live without prayer.
2. *Prayer doesn't have to be long.* Some people think that you have to pray for ages before you have really prayed. The length of our prayers really makes no difference to God. All that matters is that our prayers are Spirit-led, heartfelt and accompanied by faith.
3. *Prayer doesn't have to be complicated.* You don't have to follow a certain method or pray in a certain order, or only pray about certain things. We shouldn't think that we can "overload" God by asking for too much.
4. *Prayer doesn't have to be eloquent.* God wants you to be comfortable with him. Talk to him just like you would talk to a friend. Be yourself. Prayer should be a natural extension and expression of your unique communication style. Prayer needs to come from the heart. We simply tell the Lord what is in our hearts and we tell it the way it is – plain, simple, and straightforward. We are not trying to impress the Lord, we are trying to share our hearts with him in the Covenant. We can do this best by simply being ourselves.

Questions for Reflection

1. How does making your Covenant of Love change your way of praying? What is different?

If you wish to subscribe, comment on the text or give a testimony, write to: fr.duncan@schoenstatt.org.uk

Group Outline Text: Father Duncan McVicar, Schoenstatt Fathers, Kearsley, Bolton.