

Lord, Teach Me To Pray

Three-Part Ignatian Prayer Series for Women

† VERITAS †

Stepping on the Toes of the God Most High

Being human, and knowing how easy it is for “me, myself and I” to subtly find their way to center stage and the spotlight, it is important for us to remind ourselves now and then of the words of St. John the Baptist: “He must increase; I must decrease” (John 3:30).

In *Some Guidelines for Facilitators*, which can be found in each of the three Facilitator Manuals, we are reminded that if we are not careful, if we forget or ignore the strict limits of our role as LTMTTP Facilitators versus the much larger role of the Holy Spirit and Jesus Himself, we might find ourselves “stepping on the toes of the God Most High”. We may chuckle when we first hear this phrase; however, when we think about it for a moment, we quickly realize that this is no chuckling matter. If we ever find ourselves tempted to insert ourselves into the role or place reserved to the Holy Spirit (Director) or to Jesus Himself (Teacher), we should immediately ask ourselves: “Am I doubting that the Spirit of the Lord is truly in this place; or that the risen Jesus Christ is truly here ministering to the pray-ers in the group?” If our answer is as it should be, “Of course not”, then we should have no problem resisting that human temptation to insert ourselves where we do not belong, or to allow the focus of attention to be directed to us. “Me, myself and I” need to immediately “decrease”.

The role of the Facilitator is a very important and indispensable one. As Facilitators we “make it easy” for the women in the group to enter into, and move along on, this beautiful Ignatian prayer journey. But we are not the major players. Like St. John the Baptist, we point to the One who must increase in the lives of the pray-ers, while we make it a point – a conscious decision – to decrease. How tempting it can be to want to be the director or teacher or the one with the answers. “Excuse me Jesus; excuse me Holy Spirit. Could you two just step over to the side for a moment, or maybe go take a break for a few minutes, while I handle this one?” I don’t think so! These are toes we never want to step on.

We are very blessed because the role of the Facilitator is clearly defined and delineated. And the Facilitator Manuals provide us with exactly what we need to say and do (and, as you know, the *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops* studied the entire text of each of the three Manuals to assure consistency with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and subsequently gave LTMTTP full approval). Granted, facilitating the Faith Sharing part of the sessions requires the gradual development of a certain skill over time; but essentially, to be a holy Facilitator, all we have

Do you have questions about facilitating? Comments to share with other facilitators? Send them to carolweiler@cox.net. Technical problems with the newsletter? Change of email address? Contact caverlyd@cox.net.

to do after being trained, is to pray (both through the week and while facilitating the sessions), to stay in our Facilitator role; and to humbly follow instructions. By committing ourselves to these few things, we can keep “me, myself and I” at bay and avoid stepping on the toes of the God Most High.

Gratefully in the Jesus Our Lord

fr. Marty Gleeson, O.P.
Spiritual Advisor to the Series

Facilitators' Q & A with Carol

Q: Carol, I would like advice on how to work better with my co-facilitator. How do I get us back on track? Also if my co-facilitator doesn't seem anxious to continue facilitating what should I do?

A: Well, I have discovered that to co-facilitate requires a great deal of prayer because more than anything we want to be loving, yet at the same time realize our responsibility to faithfully follow the LTMTF Guidelines. The first step is to pray daily for your co-facilitator, then call me so we can pray together to discern the way Jesus wants you to act in the situation.

In the second half of your question you sound like you're having a hard time getting started because of an unknown. Suggest that you meet together to talk about plans to offer a part of the series. Sometimes we just need to be invited or encouraged. This good work the Lord has begun through us can be viewed through the parable of the sower. Some seed falls on the rocky soil of our heart and our desire to serve God dries up because we have stopped our daily prayer for various reasons. Or we could be the good soil, but the enemy, intent on destroying the work of God by throwing us into desolation, sweeps in through fallacious reasoning or fear or discouragement. We forget Rule No 319. Counterattack.

Though in desolation we must never change our former resolutions, it will be very advantageous to intensify our activity against the desolation. We can insist more upon prayer, upon meditation, and on much examination of ourselves. We can make an effort in a suitable way to do some penance. We must remember Mary's words to us PRAY PRAY PRAY. (Rule No. 319 Louis.J. Puhl, S.J.)

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IHS

To Abandon Your Selfish Spiritual Will For The Sake Of The Cross

As I was praying tonight my eyes fell on the words of Scripture exhorting us not to be "ashamed of the Gospel" of Jesus Christ. I thought about how, when we pray St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises in Part 2 of *Lord Teach Me To Pray*, Jesus extends to us a call "to follow him and to share in his mission". This is the same call that profoundly changed St. Ignatius' life.

Recall for a moment that the mission of Christ Jesus was to overcome all evil through the greatest act of love imaginable which was to lay down his life for all people in order that all might enter into the eternal glory of God. This is what he is calling us to, and it is indeed quite an invitation as it comes from the Son of God and it calls us to participate in the salvation, not only of ourselves, but of all.

But to respond to this call means that we agree to follow Jesus in suffering rejection, betrayal, lies, abuse, hatred, slander, envy, ridicule and perhaps even death. It means that we will never allow ourselves to be ashamed of the Gospel but rather to always stand up for truth no matter what the consequences. For a moment imagine how Jesus himself, Truth incarnate, must have felt when some of those closest to him called him a liar and a fraud; or when the Jewish hierarchy called him a blasphemer. It was at those moments when we see clearly the true power of Divine Love. Jesus never said, "O, pardon me, I didn't really mean what I said." No, Jesus responded in truth. "You would have no power over me," he said to Pilate in the face of brutal scourging and pending crucifixion, "unless it was given to you from above."

What about you and me? Today we can find ourselves running away or offering compromise at the slightest threat of injury or ridicule. When someone mocks us for sounding holy, we are tempted to hide like a rabbit chased by a fox. It can seem to us at that moment to be the worst thing that could happen to us; that someone would think we are acting piously – God forbid! Are we ashamed of the One who suffered and died on that cross for us?

The great St. Catherine of Siena provides us with some insight here. She tells us that we have “two selfish wills: one that pursues sensual and bodily things, and a spiritual one that stands its ground, alive and unmortified, under the guise and pretext of virtue.” Catherine points out that anyone long on the spiritual journey can no longer be easily fooled by “external sensual things”; but, the devil can catch such a person by her second selfish will, the spiritual one, without her even being aware of it, thereby causing her to sin. This happens because in such cases our sin is subtly hidden behind an inordinate desire or neediness for sweet consolations (flattery and prestige), and an aversion to grace-filled dark consolations (sharing in suffering with Christ). This distorted spiritual neediness subtly feeds our self-love causing us even to demand such sweet consolations from God. The fruit of this inordinate pursuit of sweet consolations is blindness to the real truth about our self. The devil baits a soul with this desire (self love) for sweetness causing it to miss great graces that are offered in the dark consolations as we unite with Jesus in his suffering. And it is these dark consolations that bear the choicest, and ultimately sweetest, fruit of all, which is a humble awareness of the real truth; i.e., that I am sinful; that without Jesus I am nothing; but that I am humbly falling into passionate love and union with God.

What a great lover of God St. Ignatius must have been. We know his story. He abandoned his comfortable life of self-love (position, influence, flattery) in exchange for answering the call of the true King, and doing so with a deep desire to suffer for and with Jesus. It was here that he found his greatest joy -- to be as his King! He abandoned his “selfish spiritual will” for the sake of the cross. He was never ashamed of the Gospel of his King but persevered in faith. As a result his heart burned with love for King Jesus. So when you suffer rejection, betrayal, ridicule, lies, slander, envy, or even death for passionately loving Jesus, REJOICE, and fall to your knees in humble gratitude for you shall one day share in His Glory.

With much gratitude for your service to our King and Lord and all of His love,

Carol Weiler

Save the Date!
Make plans NOW to attend the

2010 Weekend of Prayer

February 4-7, 2010
Airport Hilton
New Orleans, LA
with
Fr. Andrew Apostoli C.F.R.