

R C I A

Rite for the Christian Initiation of Adults

Prayer

“Prayer is the raising of the mind and heart to God.”

That simple definition from St Peter Canisius’ *Catechism* has never been surpassed. How do you pray? The answer is going to be personal, special to you. As every mind and every heart is unique, the experience of each person’s prayer is irreplaceable; and if we can see that from our perspective, it must also be true from the viewpoint of God. In various ways we forget this and turn prayer into a routine and formalistic duty which is irksome and inhuman. There is a field of guilt about prayer which needs to be swept clean. Some of the things prayer doesn’t have to be:

- 1 An impressive experience laid on for God. We don’t have to make speeches to God, as if the Queen had unfortunately dropped in for tea. He *knows* us intimately already, and we can speak in our own voice, if we need to speak at all; it may be easier to cut the cackle, and let God just look, and let him see us as we are.
- 2 An impressive experience for us. At first sight, the raising of our lives to God ought to be impressive. But indeed it often isn’t. When we are tired and used-up, the turning towards the Father can be as humble an experience as falling into bed, devoid of any grace or charm. Prayer can be just as sincere and trusting, even when it is plain of any decorative features, the honest opening up of the heart towards our Father.
- 3 A string of formulae that need to be repeated. A list of prayers can be a way of helping our prayer to “cover” such things as sorrow for sin (act of contrition), awareness of apostolate (Morning Offering) intercession (prayer for family) the dead, and the rest. But this can become the rapid rattling-off of empty words Jesus warns us about in the Gospel. There isn’t really a need for many words. What’s important is that we bring our true self to be open to God.
- 4 Full of emotion. Raising the heart to God doesn’t mean that it has to be a full heart. Some people only pray when they are impelled to prayer by a strong emotion: fear, or gratitude, or wonder. But God loves to share our life, even when it is dull and boring; even a dull, boring day can be lifted by being shared. Redemption isn’t all dramatic or heroic; sheer plod is also a time for love.



RCIA meets on Monday evening, 7 to 8 30 in the Church Hall. All are welcome!