

## **Prayer and Life**

God the Holy Spirit longs to inspire in us prayer that includes and embraces the whole of our life. It is a great privilege to be called to the religious life, which offers us every opportunity and encouragement to welcome the Spirit's transforming grace so that prayer may enter more into all that we are and all that we do.

Resisting the tendency to restrict prayer to set times, we are to aim at Eucharistic living that is responsive at all times and in all places to the divine presence. We should seek the gifts which help us to pray without ceasing. The Spirit offers us the gift of attentiveness by which we discern signs of God's presence and action in creation, in other people, and in the fabric of ordinary existence. We are called to spiritual freedom by which we surrender fretfulness and anxiety in order to be available to God in the present moment. There is the gift of spontaneity, which gives rise to frequent brief prayers throughout the day in which we look to Christ and express our faith, hope, and love. There is the gift of prompt repentance which encourages us to turn to God and ask for forgiveness the instant we become aware of a fall. Through these and other like gifts, prayer comes to permeate our life and transfigure our mundane routines.

The life of prayer calls for the courage to bring into our communion with Christ the fullness of our humanity and the concrete realities of our daily existence, which he redeemed by his incarnation. We are called to offer all our work to God and ask for the graces we need to do it Christ's name. In our prayer we are to test whether God is confirming our intentions and desires or not. We are able to pray about one another, our relationships and common endeavors. We are to bring him our sufferings and poverty, our passion and sexuality, our fears and resistances, our desires and our dreams, our losses and grief. We must spread before him our cares about the world and its peoples, our friends and families, our enemies and those from whom we are estranged. Our successes and failures, our gifts and shortcomings are equally the stuff of our prayer. We are to offer the night to God, as well as the day, our unconscious selves as well as our conscious minds, acknowledging the secret and unceasing workings of the Spirit in the depths of our hearths.

**To page 2**

**From page 1**

This deep intention at the heart of our life to find God in all things means learning to trust that divine companionship continues undiminished even when we feel only boredom and frustration. We can learn to stay still in our experience of numbness and resistance, and trust that Christ is just as truly alive in our hearts in these times as in those in which we enjoy the sense of his presence.

The more we discover through prayer how completely the divine presence permeates our life, the greater will be the integrity of our ministry as we teach others to pray. Men and women come to us not merely to learn to pray, but to learn to pray their lives. The prayer which has spread its roots into our whole life bears fruit a hundredfold as we use the resource of our own experience in guiding and initiating others.

\*\*\*\*\*

**SAINTS:**

**Perpetua, Felicity & their Companions, 7 March.** The moving, contemporary account of these early third-century, African martyrs proved to be of great significance in the life of the early Church. Vibia Perpetua was a young, married noblewoman of Carthage and Felicity was her personal slave. Saturas was possibly a priest and there were two other men, Saturninus and Revocatus, the latter also a slave. Felicity was pregnant. It seems most of them were catechumens when arrested and only baptised later in prison. They were condemned as Christians by the Roman authorities and dispatched to the public arena, there to be mauled by wild animals. They all survived and were then taken to be executed by the sword. Before this, they all exchanged the Kiss of Peace and affirmed their faith in Christ, the Son of God. The contemporary account was much circulated secretly throughout the Christian congregations and proved both to give renown to their courage and to give encouragement to their fellow Christians in the face of adversity. They were martyred for their faith on this day in the year 203.

**Edward King, Bishop of Lincoln, 8 March.** Born in London in 1829, Edward King, both as a priest and then as a bishop, was revered for the holiness of his life and the wisdom of his counsel. He was chaplain, then principal, of Cuddesdon Theological College, followed by a dozen years as a professor of theology in Oxford, during which time he exercised a great influence on a generation of ordinands. In 1885, he was consecrated bishop of the diocese of Lincoln, a position he held until his death. His advocacy of Catholic principles in ritual as well as theology involved him in controversy, but his significant gift to the Church was his example as a pastoral and caring bishop to both clergy and laity.