

Tuesday Reflection 10 August 2021

Random thoughts on prayer (cont'd)

Last week, we started looking at the importance and practice of prayer. In my experience, how we pray depends on three things - our view of God, our view of ourselves and our view of our relationships - with God and with who/what is around us.

If we see God as a judgemental father, then this will influence the way we try to communicate with Him; if we see Him as a gentle and merciful guide, which is how he comes across to me in the Lord's Prayer, then our prayer will have a different quality. For me, it goes without saying that God is infinitely greater than we are, but at the same time we are part of God's Creation, and as such we are not separate from God, even though we may have distanced ourselves from Him. Neither are we separate from the rest of Creation, which is an interdependent whole.

Looking at the world we live in, I feel that part of our present tragedy is our state of alienation - we have alienated ourselves from God, from our fellow human beings and from the rest of Creation.

With regard to the last, we are slowly becoming aware of the disastrous consequences of regarding ourselves as separate from the rest of Creation, and are slowly facing up to our responsibility for the increasing frequency of what we still like to call 'natural disasters'. At the same time, however, with regard to the second, we are continuing to sow division and dissent among our fellow human beings - our brothers and sisters in God - by fostering false and artificial divisions.

So, if we have lost sight of our oneness with our fellow human beings and continue to see ourselves as separate and independent from non-human creation, how on earth (literally) are we to overcome our alienation from God and achieve re-union with him? As we read in the First Letter of St John "Whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, how can he love God, whom he has not seen?" (1 John 4:20).

It seems to me that prayer is there to help us achieve that sense of union with God and His Creation. The place to start, I suggest, is with ourselves in the here and now, by becoming more self-aware, perhaps through the practice of mindfulness - which is, however, but a first step, not an end in itself. For me there are three aspects of self-awareness; firstly to examine where I am - perhaps by using the Ignatian practice of the Examen. Secondly I need to sharpen my awareness that as a child of God I have His Spirit dwelling within me. Thirdly I need to be attentive to my place in Creation.

Writing this is quite hard going - but probably nothing like as hard as it is for you to read it, so perhaps this is a good point to have a break and pick up the thread again next week.

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