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PRAYING

This Sunday morning at 9:30 a.m. Fr. O'Brien will take the Adult class through a marvelous paper of Fr. Crouse on the theology of prayer, called "Heavenly Avarice". To assist your meditations, here are some texts complementary to Fr. Crouse's paper from the Anglican tradition about prayer.

The place of honour goes to the famous poem of George Herbert (1593-1633). It is both the most demanding of literary forms (the sonnet) and the simplest (a list), and the paradox of its form matches its marvelous and paradoxical images, both simple and profound, that culminate in the simplicity of the last two words. Perhaps he is thinking of the teaching of Apostle Paul: "now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Corinthians 13:12), or the gospel for Rogation Sunday: "These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs [or parables, enigmatic speech]: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father" (John 16:25). [The "plummet" is the plumb line which sounds the depths; the "engine" and "tower" refer to the military machinery used in besieging walled cities.]

PRAYER

Prayer the Church's banquet, Angel's age,
God's breath in man returning to his birth,
The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,
The Christian plummet sounding heav'n and earth;
Engine against th'Almighty, sinners' tower,
Revers'd thunder, Christ-side-piercing spear,
The six-days-world transposing in an hour,
A kind of tune, which all things hear and fear;

Softness, and peace, and joy, and love, and bliss,
Exalted Manna, gladness of the best,
Heaven in ordinary, man well drest,
The milky way, the bird of Paradise,
Church-bells beyond the stars heard, the soul's blood,
The land of spices; something understood.

On the Necessity of Prayer

The Prayer Book Catechism situates its teaching on the necessity of prayer in the willing of God's will.

My good child, know this; that thou art not able to do these things [required by duty to God and neighbour] by thyself, nor to walk in the Commandments of God, and to serve him, without his special grace; which thou must learn at all times to call for by diligent prayer.

On Prayer as Need

In "The Parable of the Wicked Mammon", William Tyndale (1494-1536), the chief translator of the English Bible, who lived an exile and died a martyr for his faith, writes this meditation on the nature of prayer, which is a kind of commentary on the Lord's Prayer, and grounded in the psalms.

Prayer is a mourning, a longing, and desire of the spirit to God-ward, for that which she lacketh; as a sick man mourneth and sorroweth in his heart, longing for health. Faith ever prayeth. For after that by faith we are reconciled to God, and have received mercy and forgiveness of God, the spirit longeth and thirsteth for strength to do the will of God, and that God may be honoured, his name hallowed, and his pleasure and will fulfilled. The spirit waiteth and watcheth on the will of God, and ever hath her own fragility and weakness before her eyes; and when she seeth temptation and peril draw nigh, she turneth to God, and to the testament that God hath made to all that believe and trust in Christ's blood; and desireth God for his mercy and truth, and for the love he hath to Christ, that he will fulfill his promise, and that he will succor, and help, and give us strength, and that he will sanctify his name in us, and fulfill his godly will in us, and that he will not look on our sin and iniquity, but on his mercy, on his truth, and on the love that oweth to his Son Christ; and for his sake to keep us from all temptation, that we be not overcome; and that he deliver us from evil,

and whatsoever moveth us contrary to his godly will. Moreover, of his own experience he feelth other men's need, and no less commendeth to God the infirmities of other than his own, knowing that there is no strength, no help, no succor, but of God only. And as merciful as he feeleth God in his heart to himself-ward, so merciful is he to other; and as greatly as he feeleth his own misery, so great compassion hath he on other. His neighbour is no less care to him than himself: he feeleth his neighbour's grief no less than his own.

The Rev'd Gavin G Dunbar

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