

FORWARD IN THE SPIRIT The People's Synod

Diocese of Victoria



FORWARD *in the* SPIRIT

Challenge of the People's Synod

Preface by Remi J. De Roo
Bishop of Victoria

Prayer comes in as many forms and styles as there are people because individual prayer is personal. If we are happy, it is expressed in a joyful way. If we are sad, upset or angry, we cry out in lamentation. Prayer is sometimes expressed in the silent praise of a beautiful sunset or in seeing Christ in another. Prayer is **listening** to the "Our Father" as we recite it. Prayer is entering into public worship. Prayer is withdrawing to a place of quiet to commune with God.

How do you see God today?

PERSONAL THOUGHTS ON PRAYER

Hélène Davey, delegate

Ascension Parish, French Creek

Prayer is an expression of faith, an opportunity to give thanks. It provides peace and tranquility for me through a greater closeness to Jesus Christ. Prayer provides me with an attitude of openness and wisdom. Prayer opens me to the wonders of God's presence. Prayer provides solitude.

In the church community, prayer brings a deeper awareness of God's love for all of us. It enables us to meet the challenge to live together in unity as brothers and sisters.

I expect the diocese to help me in my prayer life and spirituality by nourishing creative ways of prayer, by providing workshops and seminars on the various forms of prayer and by encouraging the church community to pray for the interests of all humankind.

I can contribute to this by using the **gift of prayer**, opening myself to the presence of God, discovering how to be more aware of God's gift and how to live this gift creatively.

A NEW CONSCIOUSNESS

Fr. Charles Brandt, reactor

Black Creek

"Integrate spirituality and prayer into life."

- A Synod decision.

In all things there is a "hidden ground of Love". These are the words of Thomas Merton, my mentor in the life of prayer. He was one of the guides who inspired me to live as a hermit these last 25 years.

In my Anglican days, Dom John Chapman's *Letters* taught me Christian meditation, and a protégé of his, Evelyn Underhill, also was a source of inspiration. Later, it was through the writings of Dom Bede

Griffiths, OSB, I found my way into the Catholic church. In 1989, I spent two months in Father Bede's Ashram, Saccidananda, South India. There "the hidden ground of Love" confirmed me in the path of "praying always".

I have come to realize that while we are distinct from this Loving Ground, the cosmic Christ, we are not separate from Him. Here lies the basis for contemplative prayer. On this foundation we build a life of prayer. To seek how to "pray always" is not necessary since this stream of love, is always flowing between Jesus and the Father. We simply have to become aware of this constant Stream of Love.

A Sufi story speaks to this: One day a Lover approached the home of his Beloved. He knocked on the door. A Voice within responded to the knocking: "Who is there?" The Lover answered: "It is I". The Voice within spoke, almost sadly: "There is no room here for me and thee." The Lover went away and spent much time trying to learn the meaning of the words of his Beloved. Sometime later he once again approached the home of his Beloved and knocked. Once again, the Voice within asked: "Who is there?" This time the Lover answered: "It is Thou". And the door opened and he entered the home of his Beloved.

This story in its two parts describes two modes of spirituality. Many of us, I think, move from where we sense we are separate from God to where we realize that, although **distinct**, we are **not separate**. This realization confirms that we are not separate from our brother and sister, nor from the earth.

At first, my spirituality was more about doing than being: more about fulfilling God's will than experiencing it. This spirituality of dualism clearly stressed God's transcendence and separateness from the world.

The second mode of spirituality is less verbal, less speculative. It prefers silence to words. Experience is more important than scholastic terminology. There is a great desire to experience God. It is in forgetting myself that I find God and discover my true self in God. I feel comfortable in saying "It is Thou". I come to realize that God's transcendence necessarily flows into immanence.

Where does contemplation lead one? Since it finds the Ground of Love in all reality, it leads to one's sisters and brothers: it creates a social consciousness; it leads to a deeper unity and love with and for the earth.

Contemplation leads to transformation. Without being unmindful of the need for change in behaviour, the stress is on the need for a change in consciousness, coming to see reality differently.

As Thomas Berry points out, it is necessary for the human community and the earth community to go into the future as a single sacred

community. The key to this is recognition that while distinct from the Ground of Love, we are not separate. Then we realize our unity and communion with every human being, with the earth and with the universe.

SECOND CALLING

Eileen Curteis, SSA, reactor

*When He calls a second time
hasten to listen
and if it is you He is beckoning
let not your face be hidden from Him
but go as wings would have you go
stretching forth your hand
your right hand to meet Him.*

*And if His voice
in the wind you hear
let love lead you to Him.*

*Let nothing deter you
no breeze, no storm,
no faulty motion in you
but if for whatever reason
the air be contrary
let it be contrary.*

*Above all be true
to what you know and feel
in this way
your love shall be proved real.*