

Prayer, the Cry of a Child

Words from Catherine Doherty (1896-1985)

The first step in praying is to understand who we are, and that is awfully difficult. We must acknowledge that we are creatures, saved sinners, entirely dependent on God. We must be, as the bible says, *anawim*, poor people of God, the poor people of the beatitudes who *know* that they depend on God. We must face ourselves and realize that we cannot exist on our own, that we are *dependent*.

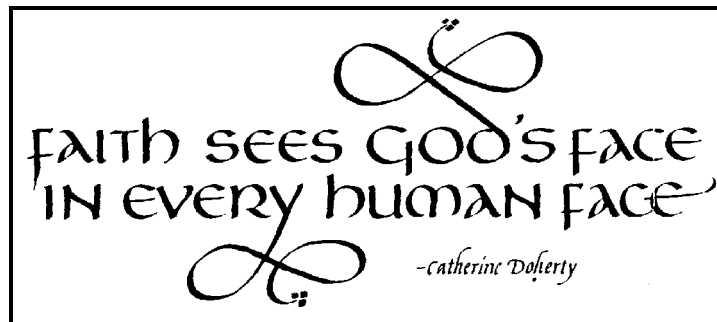
To the proud, this is anathema. We look at ourselves and we say “I depend on no one”—and suddenly, in the very saying, we realize that this is not so: we do depend on God. This is the beginning of prayer: that we become beggars before God, knowing that we receive even the steps we take from him.

To begin to pray we must first cleanse our souls of arrogance and pride. In grave humility and as beggars, must we come to him who alone can make us princes and kings and queens, not of earthly kingdoms, but of the kingdom of God. Only when we are thus poor and realize our total poverty, can we go to Bethlehem and meet the Child who became poor for us.

Is there any human being who does not respond to the cry of a child? Did you ever consider the first cry of the Child Jesus? It was his first message of love to us. When we know that we are poor, we can easily enter Bethlehem and answer his cry. We can easily walk behind the donkey that bears the woman and

Child. If we are poor we will not hesitate to enter the humble home of Nazareth to take part in the hospitality of Joseph and Mary. Yet the proud and the arrogant look down their noses at simple folk from Nazareth: “Can anything good come from Nazareth?”

If we realize our own poverty we will follow him who had nowhere to lay his head. Prayer is the interpersonal relationship of a poor man with *the* Poor Man.



If we remain poor and keep following the Poor Man, a change will take place. Up to a point Christ will console us. But as our prayer

deepens, we will enter the darkness of a fantastic faith, a faith that we have to pray for. The time will come when *we will have to console Christ*. For we see him all over the world—in slums, in Park Avenue—in people committing suicide because of the greed of people.

When we console him our prayer will take on a new dimension. The Son of Man became incarnate that we might console him, so that in consoling him we might learn to console one another, to be tender toward one another. He offered himself as a victim for us on the cross so that we might take him in our arms as Our Lady took him in hers.

Our prayer will be dirgelike, and yet, a joy! Our pain will be purified and our prayer will have moved into another dimension: we will want to be on the

cross because Love is crucified. A strange thing will happen: our prayer will become a prayer of joy, a fantastic resting in the heart of God.

Thus from a recognition of our total dependence we are led to a prayer where we realize the Father is coming to us, know the touch of his hand, see Christ's human face reflecting his glory. Thus does prayer become a total and final resting place, a unity,

a complete union of ourselves with God. The darkness of faith grows light and there is no need for words anymore. There is only a need for rest, the rest of a beloved in the arms of her Beloved.

(Excerpted from *The Gospel Without Compromise*, by Catherine de Hueck Doherty.)

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