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2007

Praying, From Here to There

Fr. Randy Roche

Loyola Marymount University

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Roche, Fr. Randy, "Praying, From Here to There" (2007). *Spiritual Essays*. 111.

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Praying, From Here to There

Some people drive a car while talking on a cell phone, and some people walk in stores and many other places, also talking on cell phones. Many of us have carried on a conversation with a friend while both of us were engaged in some occupation. Communication does not always require our full concentration. The more fully our attention is needed for whatever we are doing, the less we are able to participate in a dialogue. Conversely, if we are performing a habitual action requiring little attentiveness, we can maintain a fairly involved exchange with one or more persons.

Sometimes, when we are not wholly focused on a task, we enjoy companionship with others even if we do not converse. We might experience wordless communion while walking away from a particularly intense meeting, or sitting together in a waiting room at a hospital. We can share mutual concerns at times when words would be inappropriate and unwelcome, or when brief interchanges would be sufficient. Our communications with one another vary greatly, according to the circumstances of the moment, yet all can be quite significant. Since our availability for face-to-face dialogue is limited according to our occupations and priorities, we adjust our interactions with others accordingly.

When we pray, all of the modes and manners of human communication apply in our relationship with God. At times, we arrange for private, personal encounters with God, leaving all other interests aside. At other times, we might be partially engaged in some activity, and still carry on communication with God. We might be driving a car or walking somewhere, and purposefully turn off the radio or iPod. Though we drive or walk with appropriate attention and care, we can also choose to open ourselves to the experience of travelling from here to there, with God.

At our desk, in a brief pause between tasks, or at home doing some simple activity such as folding laundry, we can direct some of our attention towards God, who is certainly interested in us, no matter what we might be doing or not doing. We can work at some minor chores while quietly communicating with God. During periods of intense and complete occupation, we might pause briefly to take a conscious breath, and to be aware of God who is with us in all our thinking, creating, imagining and working.

We do not have to be in a church or dedicated space to relate with God, any more than we must be in a special "conversation room" to speak with a family member or talk to an acquaintance. Whether in a vehicle, walking across a yard, or climbing the stairs, we are able to pass a word with another person, and we can do so even more easily with God. We don't have to call out to get God's attention. We are gifted with the capacity of choosing to "aim" some of our thoughts and concerns to God, who is present wherever we might be.

When our minds are not fully occupied with some task, thoughts come and go. Some of those "empty times" are fine occasions for recalling the Other who is present. We can, with or without interior words, become grateful for the companionship of God. Another practice for some of those moments when we are not fully occupied, is to look ahead in the day, imagining what we will be doing, and invite God's inspirations and presence for those future actions, events, or matters of concern.

We can pray while we go from one place to another: from here to there. Whenever we pray, our attention and focus moves from our hearts to God's and God's heart to ours. Distance is not a factor; our intention and desire make possible the movement of prayer from here, where we are, to there, where God is.