

When you pray use your feet – Reflection 3 - on prayer

This is our last day here in Davao City but this saying caught my eye as I was looking through the credits at the end of the film **Inconvenient Truth** yesterday. It was embedded in the many solutions suggested in solving this problem of Global warming. The credits attributed these words to an African proverb and as such it was supposed to have some deep and meaningful lesson for us. Well it escaped me, but after some reflection it dawned on me and I hope you don't mind me sharing it. Does **prayer without good works** ring any bells? But this thought only forced me to go deeper. Praying at home in Perth was a good experience and I thank my Community for that, but was that enough? Some how I was forced to use my feet also and made that big decision to place me name in the pot for the Philippine Mission. The Global Warming issue by the way is worth reflecting on and I probably will be moved to do just that next time I write.

Anyway, on my return journey from the old country after saying my goodbyes to my departed Mother, may she rest in peace, I was lucky enough to pass through India doing the tourist thing and visiting as many places as time allowed. Among other things I remember visiting a temple and playing with the prayer-wheels, and there must have been a hundred of them around the room. Tourist were permitted to take a spin so I did so personally seeing twenty or more of these prayer wheels spinning at once and thinking it was even easier than saying the rosary. I thought; well the fitter you are the more prayers you could send up to the gods. My friend, being fitter than me, sent some thirty wheels spinning at once but he had to run between wheels to accomplish this. Each wheel had what I presumed to be prayers written on them so it saves you even having to mouth them. I worked out I could send a rosaries worth in just a minute. Of course intellectually I was quite dismissive and thought them a bit of a laugh. How could just spinning a wheel send praise to God? Well now I I'm thinking it could be done and probably was being done daily. Let me explain where I am coming from here.

True prayer it seems to me is a free act of the will or of the heart if you like and words are only useful if they help you attain that state. The beautiful contemplative prayer we learnt while experiencing "the God in the Now retreats" back in Girrawheen brought this home to me and I thank the Renewal team for making it available to us. We can say or mouth all the learnt prayers we like but with out that act of the will we may as well just spin those wheels for all the good it will do. Buda and prayer-wheels are not my way but some how I feel there are many roads to loving God. If the monks first form the intention of wanting to love God before they start spinning those wheels I guess those wheels just may be a legitimate way to God after all and anyway who am I to say they are not. "When you pray move your feet" and you certainly had to do that.

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The prodigal Son story is well known and I'm thinking about the son's state of mind just before he decides to return to his father. His prayer was very basic as he exercised his intellect while remembering how forgiving and how loving his father was, and of course how well off they all were at home while he realised how miserable he was. Had he not dared to return because of the fear of rejection or the sheer shame of what confronted him, then there would have been no prayer and there certainly would have been no forgiveness and no celebration. ***"When you pray move your feet"*** is starting to mean something.

The obvious truth to all this reflection is that if we pray to the Father but He does not move us to love Him or we don't feel the urge to reach out and just say "I love you Lord" then we may have only half prayed to coin a phrase. Love begets action which means we are compelled to move not only our feet but our whole being. If we feel no desire to move towards God some how we have missed the boat. I heard someone say the heart is the engine that drives the whole body. Well our will is activated by the heart and its no coincidence that love is always associated with the heart. The very desire to pray to God is the first step in the action of praying and a gift from a loving Father. So if you are lucky enough to be given this gift you are half way to real communion with God. Once we experience this desire then we must continue to respond by reaching out to Him in love and just maybe we will experience his love in return. My Novice master used the term "productive prayer" to explain that a prayerful person will accomplish great things. I suspect he was trying to say what these words so beautifully say. James a friend of mine, who has a wife and two children and I love them very much, sent me an emailed just recently and the words he used to explain what he was going through might well be applied to prayer and are very reassuring and certainly help me when I think I am struggling which is often.

"The only thing I remember is a quote I learned at school: "Loving is worth the pain" and this is something I believe and try to live by in my own imperfect way...God will hopefully makes up for what I lacking!"

God will make up for what is lacking is the real issue here because none of us can do it alone. Everyone finds love in there every day life we just need the eyes of faith not only to see it but to help us be motivated to own that love and action it in our own lives. It is powerful enough to start our own engine and that is what is happening to me. All I want to do is love my God and love my fellow man. But alas these are just words and I strongly believe words without action are meaningless I also need to pray for the gift our Prodigal son had, and that is: When he prayed he moved his feet. "Lord help me see the wisdom of these words and have the courage to act on them". Amen. Peter Thrupp (cfc) 2008