

A Surge of the Heart

- 2558 Saint Thérèse of Lisieux,
also called the Little Flower,
wrote a profound and joyous book
encouraging an attitude of unlimited hope
in God’s merciful love.
“For me,” she wrote,
“prayer is a surge of the heart.
It is a simple look turned toward heaven
and a cry of recognition and of love
embracing both trial and joy.”
- 2559 In prayer, the Holy Spirit works in us,
raising our minds and hearts to God,
entering into intimate conversation
and offering God ourselves.
- 2560 We have within us an inborn hunger for God.
Early in John’s Gospel is a story
that reveals this mystery.
Jesus is speaking with a woman near a well.
He asks her for a drink
and they begin a wonderful conversation.
In it, Jesus teaches her that everyone who drinks
from the well by which they stood
would become thirsty again.
“But those who drink of the water that I will give,”
he told her,
“will never be thirsty.”
For the water Jesus promised
would become an inner wellspring,
“gushing up to eternal life!”
This is the wellspring of prayer,
with Jesus as its source

and eternal life as the outcome.

We seek to drink from the same divine well,
and Christ stands ready to give us a drink.

2561 For us Christians,
prayer is the response of faith
to the free promise of healing
and a response of love
to our thirst to know Christ.

2562 So, when we pray,
it is always with our entire self.
Our hearts swell with love.
When our hearts are near to God,
when we cultivate this closeness,
prayer flows like water from that well.

2563 By this, we don't mean our biological hearts
but the center of our persons,
that place where we are most authentic.
We might call this our soul.
The soul is where we make a covenant with God,
the place where the divine indwelling
becomes an encounter that sustains us.

2564 In prayer, we move toward God
and God moves toward us.
It is a twofold relationship, a joint effort,
with the Spirit of Love
guiding us at every step.

2565 In prayer, we encounter the Triune God
aside from all our theology
and rational thinking.
In prayer, we come to know God as Father,
or perhaps as Mother.
It is the father of the prodigal child
waiting and watching,
hoping we will come home.



*In prayer,
we move
toward God
and God moves
toward us.*

It is the mother of the sick child in Tyre and Sidon,
trusting and demanding,
even *arguing* for Jesus' healing touch.
In prayer, we come to know Christ
as the revelation of God, who is love.
It is the discovery
of the reign of God among us
and the joy of dying and rising in Christ.
In prayer, we come to know the Spirit
as an energy of love,
a powerhouse of grace.

All Are Called

- 2566 Throughout history,
we humans have sought God.
We are in search of God still.
Even though we have an inclination to selfishness,
yet there remains that inner voice
calling us away from self-centeredness,
calling us home to God.
- 2567 In prayer,
we are constantly responding to God's call.
God's initiative comes first
and we enter into a mysterious,
divine encounter.

Throughout History

- 2568 Prayer is the glue that binds human history,
for history tells of the unfolding relationship
between God and us.
- 2569 The first nine chapters of the Book of Genesis
are filled with figurative language
about God communicating with us humans.
We are said to have offered God thanksgiving gifts,
to have walked with God in the evening,



to have called on the divine name,
to have been blessed by God for upright living,
and to have received God's promise of fidelity.
But the most dramatic encounter with God
for the entire human family
is told through the story
of Abraham and Sarah.

2570 Abraham was attentive in his heart
to the will and desire of God for him.

What drew Abraham and Sarah forth
to leave the land and people they knew
and venture into the unknown,
following their hearts?

2571 Abraham's prayer is made in silence
as he welcomes that mysterious guest
to pause on his journey and join him for a meal,
as told in Genesis chapter 18, verses 1 to 15.

Abraham kept his heart attuned to the divine voice,
echoing in its depths.

2573 Likewise Jacob,
who wrestled with a mysterious figure
much as we might wrestle
with a mysterious idea
or question
or problem.

Jacob persevered that night, and so must we.

"I will not let you go," Jacob told his foe
in Genesis chapter 32, verse 26,
"unless you bless me."

2574 The voice of God continued to echo
down through the years.

2575 Using figurative language once again,
God spoke from a burning bush,
and Moses, balking and questioning at first,
listened well in the end
and followed where that voice led him.

“The Lord would speak to Moses face to face,”
the text tells us in Exodus chapter 33, verse 11,
“as one speaks to a friend.”

GROUP OR PERSONAL PROCESS

When is it most difficult for you to pray?

*When you pray, how do you address God?
What kind of things do you pray about?*

*How do you hear God calling you to spend time talking with him
in the intimate encounter that is prayer?*

How does God speak to us in prayer?

What can we learn from our faith ancestors about God’s voice?

*What resonates with you during prayer? Do you talk with God
as you would with a friend? Do you laugh? Do you hear God thank you
for your work and love?*