

Connecting With God
Sermon Handout – Lent 5 – March 29, 2020

The following are some ways that we can turn to God in our daily lives. I encourage you to experiment with different practices.

First thing in the morning, give your day to God. Use whatever words you would like. Examples include: “This one is for you, Lord,” or “God, I give you this day,” or “Be with me and guide me. Help me bring your presence to others.” Another idea is to let everything that is passing through your mind be simply opened and offered to God.¹

Carry a reminder of God’s presence. Wear a piece of jewelry or place an item in your pocket as a tangible reminder of God’s presence. When you see or feel this item, pause, turn your heart to God. You can also use Psalm verses like “To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul” (Ps. 25:1) or any words that are meaningful to you such as “You are with me; I trust in you.”

Another practice is to set your watch, smartphone or computer to chime at a certain time, which will become an intentional time to recollect God’s presence with you.

Whatever you choose, keep in mind that you are setting an intention that does not require you to feel anything, although you may. When we outwardly turn to God, our inward being opens wide to the mystery and grace of God that comes deep within which may be outside our conscious mind. As we turn we have faith in this Ever-Present God.

Repeat a short prayer or a Bible verse throughout the day. This works especially well when the work of the moment is physical. Use your favorite Bible verse such as, “The Lord is my shepherd,” or “Do not let your hearts be troubled,” or “Be still, and know that I am God.” Or use your own words.

Listen to a spiritual book or uplifting music. Even if you move around, you can do either of these using a CD player, IPod, tablet, or Smartphone. No hard rock, heavy metal, or audio mystery novels, please. Try singing along with hymns or listening to an inspiring choral work by Bach or Handel.

Read Holy Scripture or an uplifting book slowly, savoring each word and idea. God speaks to us especially through Holy Scripture. As you read *slowly*, using especially the Psalms, when something strikes you, stop and reflect on the words or phrase. What seems important to you about them? How does the thought connect with your life? Talk to God about this. For another handout on this practice, called *lectio divina* or “holy reading,” [click here](#).

Send arrow prayers to God throughout the day. Arrow prayers are very brief prayers that can be said quickly and are easily remembered. They consist of a single word or phrase and

¹ This idea of offering our thoughts to God comes from Tilden Edwards in *Weavings*, July/August, 1992.

come from Scripture, from spiritual writings, or are your own words. For example: Lord, you are my shepherd (Ps. 23:1; Come, Lord Jesus! (Rev. 22:20); Lord, I love you; Help me; Thank you for all. Find specific times to pray throughout the day. Throughout the day you'll have contact with God. In a sense, prayer will never cease and God's presence will sustain and support.

Do your best to live in the present moment. This can be difficult as we face challenges and uncertainties. Yet, God is in the present moment. So we can focus on where we are *right now* – doing the dishes, sending an email, walking from one room to another, walking outside. Zero in on that. We can also be open to the unexpected and accept what is before us. We don't have to *like* it. We just need to say, "This is the reality. I can work with this." And finally, we can find ways to give thanks. Spiritual writers tell us this is a sure way to peace of mind.

Take a thankfulness walk. This is a gentle way to offer prayers of thanksgiving. In it we focus on our senses and let what we experience become our prayer of thanksgiving. Using this prayer outdoors is especially meaningful but anywhere will work.

Begin with your sight. As you walk, stand, or sit, look around, and give thanks for the ability to see. Give thanks for what you see. Pray for those who cannot see. Then move to your hearing. Give thanks for your ability to hear. Listen to the sounds around you. Give thanks for each and offer prayers for those who cannot hear. Move on to smell, touch, and taste or stay with just one of the senses, as long as you're able to be alert to what you are praying.

Do a nightly thanks review. At the end of each day record three to five things for which you're thankful. My guess is that, over time, your daily list will expand as you put on the glasses of thankfulness as you view the world.

If you have any questions or thoughts about the above practices, please contact Jane Tomaine by phone at 908-233-0134 or via email at jtomaine1685@verizon.net.

May God bless you and keep you.

The suggested practices are drawn from *St. Benedict's Toolbox: The Nuts and Bolts of Everyday Benedictine Living*, 2015, written by Jane Tomaine, all rights reserved.

