

Prayer is the light of the heart

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SECOND SUNDAY

Gn. 12:1-4; 2Tm. 1:8b-10; Mt. 17:1-9

Certain dark or bright days help us discover—with swinging moods—the fascination of light, which changes our perception of things. People too change profoundly depending on whether or not they are exposed to light. It is similar to meeting a person with a bright or dark gaze. The experience of Peter, James and John—who unexpectedly witnessed the change on the face of Jesus—must have been even more powerful.

In fact, the Gospel text says that “his face shone like the sun,” underscoring that the event was an astounding revelation of Jesus’ secret identity. These three disciples, who a short time later would witness the incomprehensible end of their Master, were permitted to share this brief experience of light. In effect, there is an inevitable and necessary link here: the transfiguration without the cross is empty, while the cross without the transfiguration is blind.

“[Jesus] led them up a high mountain by themselves,” and while he prayed, this unique experience of God took place. It is through prayer that we too are transfigured. But what is prayer? A relaxation technique? Psycho-physical well-being? Concentration and self-awareness? It is much more than all this. By observing Jesus, we can grasp at least two aspects of prayer. First of all, it is a search for *solitude*: it involves being alone so as to meet someone. We are not talking about isolation, but a fruitful space in which to meet both God and ourselves. This is why personal prayer comes first and communal prayer second. If we do not take time to meet God personally, then the public, shared aspect of the Liturgy is impossible. Prayer is also—and above all—*listening*: it is God who takes the initiative, not us. We are not the ones who pray, who experience him in ways that are to greater or lesser degrees gratifying to the self. Everything depends on God. And the accent falls not so much on seeing as on listening. Listening requires passivity—a state that generates life much more effectively than a lot of self-talk.

It is not by chance that the effects of prayer quickly manifest themselves. Prayer makes things more lucid; it helps us avoid getting lost in details; it gives us clear goals. We even save time because interior clarity ensures that we do not jump from one thing to another. Prayer also fortifies us, that is, it makes us capable of withstanding external pressures and helps us avoid a groveling conformity that leads us to replicate the judgments and actions of others. Finally, prayer helps us live in greater freedom because it enables us to understand an interior world that broadens our horizons, liberating us from the narrow confines of what is trite, taken for granted or one-dimensional.

Fr. Domenico Pompili

Prayer is...

***Prayer is the fruit of silence.
Faith is the fruit of prayer.
Love is the fruit of faith.
Service is the fruit of love.
Peace is the fruit of service.***

(Blessed Teresa of Calcutta)