

## **Prayer is the very life of a Christian**

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Ten or 12 years ago I experienced a rigorous working trip that involved stops in ten cities across the country in as many days. When I arrived home and settled in, the first thing I did was sit down to celebrate Evening Prayer.

I prayed the psalmody, I read the Scripture passage, I began the Canticle of Mary.... With a start I looked up and thought to myself: Where am I? What city is this? What day is this? What time is it?

Then I realized I was home. It was Monday evening, I was praying the Liturgy of the Hours and the Lord had gifted me with blessed rest and sleep. I don't know how long I had been dozing, but I was probably awakened when my wife arrived home from the supermarket.

There are many obstacles to prayer but is sleep one of them?

In the face of all the distractions we face when we try to pray -- the events of the work day, children, bills, anger, frustration, neighbors, family, the TV -- our constant return to prayer is prayer itself.

Prayer, it has been said so many times, is raising our hearts and minds to God; it is our communication with God. Prayer is the very life of the Christian, for if we were to compare faith to a tree, then prayer is its roots.

No relationship of any quality can long exist without communication and without prayer our relationship with God will soon wither and die.

God speaks to us in many ways: in Scripture, liturgy, nature, other people.

In the events of the day, any day, the Holy Spirit can draw us into prayer: in the encounter with a new mother and her child; someone sick or elderly; a beloved friend or relative; the magnificence of nature, the color of the trees; the abundance of the harvest, even a disastrous earthquake or flood.

In any of those events, we can encounter the presence of God, not the God of yesterday or tomorrow, but the God of today, of the present.

A renowned harpist tells the story about practicing one summer afternoon before an open window. She stepped away from the harp for a moment and from the other side of the room she heard the sound of distant and beautiful music that lasted only a few seconds. When she heard it again, she noticed that the curtains by the window were billowing and a gentle breeze was coming through the window and passing over the strings of the harp.

At times of prayer, when we encounter the presence of God, we can be like that harp. By allowing sufficient calm and stillness to surround us, the Holy Spirit, the Breath of God, may play his beautiful music on us.

Take time in the weeks ahead to be aware of God's presence. Be still, listen, then respond.