

Good Steward Newsletter – May 2011

May 13, 2011 by [O'Meara Ferguson](#)

Prayer Responds to Our Desire for God



In a recent audience celebrated in St. Peter's Square, Pope Benedict XVI said that our age is "marked by ... an apparent eclipse of God" but that, at the same time, there are "signs of a renewed religious sense".

"Looking at recent history, the pope said, "predictions of those who, from the age of Enlightenment, foretold the disappearance of religions and exalted absolute reason, separated from faith, have failed".

Why have they failed? Because the desire for God is fundamental to who we are as human beings. It is an integral part of our identity as spiritual persons. We long for God. We seek Him. We want to be united with Him, to see Him face-to-face, and to be immersed in His overwhelming love.

Many modern thinkers suggest that the desire for God is something individuals and culture can outgrow as they become more sophisticated. Pope Benedict disagrees. He believes that "the human being is religious by nature. ... The image of the Creator is engraved on human beings, who feel the need to find a light to answer the questions regarding the profound meaning of reality; an answer that we cannot find in ourselves, in progress, or in empirical science".

"We know that we cannot respond alone to our basic need to understand," the pope says. "For however much we think we are self-sufficient, we experience that we do not suffice. We need to open ourselves to something else, something or someone, that can give us what is missing. We must go out of ourselves and go toward the One who is capable of satisfying the width and breadth of our desire".

Among the many gifts we have received from a good and gracious God, is the gift of "a thirst for the infinite, a yearning for eternity, a search for beauty, a desire for love, a need for light and truth, which impel us toward the Absolute." To be grateful stewards of the gift of our fundamental spirituality, we must cherish and cultivate it responsibly. And we must share our yearning for God with others.

"We carry within us the desire for God," the Holy Father says. "In some way, we know that we can turn to God, that we can pray to Him. St. Thomas Aquinas, one of the greatest theologians of history, defined prayer as 'the expression of humanity's desire for God'". When we express our desire for God in prayer, we share it generously with Him and with all those we pray with and for.

According to Pope Benedict, "Prayer has its center and sinks its roots in the depth of the person. That is why it is not easily decipherable and, for the same reason, why it can be the object of misunderstanding and manipulation. ... The experience of prayer is a challenge for all, a 'grace' that must be invoked, a gift of the One to whom we address ourselves".

We are called to be stewards of this most precious gift, the gift of prayer that is the expression of our desire for God. In prayer, we acknowledge that we are not independent or self-sufficient. Everything we have and all that we are comes to us from the One who is the Creator and Sustainer of all material and spiritual gifts. As the Holy Father says, “In the experience of prayer we orient our very souls to that Mystery from which we look for the fulfillment of our deepest desires and help to overcome the poverty of our lives. In looking to the Other, in directing ourselves ‘beyond’, is found the essence of prayer, the experience of a reality that goes beyond the apparent and the contingent”.

As stewards of this innate desire for union with God, we must acknowledge that we will be held accountable for our development and use of the gift of prayer—the expression of our innate spirituality. Even we when abuse this gift by forgetting our Creator and substituting in His place things that can never truly satisfy our longing for God, we are forgiven. As the Holy Father reminds us, “Even though human beings are forgetful of their Creator, the true and living God never stops calling humanity first to the mysterious encounter of prayer”.

“We must learn to spend more time in front of God, before the God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ; we must learn to recognize in silence, within our very selves, his voice that calls us and leads us to the depth of our existence, to the fount of life and the source of salvation, so that we might overcome the limit of our lives and open ourselves to the measure of God, the relationship with He who is Infinite Love”.

Our desire for God is a gift we must cherish and share. Help us, Lord, to be grateful stewards of our spirituality. Help us to render an account of our stewardship of this most precious gift. Help us to search for you and love you in all that we say and do.