

The 34th Annual Summer Conference—Building the Church

A Retreat for All Ages

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Benedictine Sisters, Mt. Angel, OR

CONFERENCE THREE

BASIL HUME: THE PASTOR

Always think of God as your lover. Therefore he wants to be with you, just as the lover wants to be with the beloved. He wants your attention, as every lover wants the attention of the beloved. He wants to listen to you, as every lover wants to hear the voice of the beloved. If you turn to me and ask, 'Are you in love with God?' I would pause, hesitate and say, 'I am not certain. But of one thing I *am* certain—that he is in love with me.

—Basil Hume, *The Mystery of Love*

Prayer and the Search for God

"We talk of knowing *about* God, whereas the point is to know God. We want to know God, that is why there is prayer in our lives. It is only in the experience of praying that we become aware not only that we seek God, but that God is always seeking us."¹

FOR REFLECTION:

- ✓ What does it mean to **know** God?
- ✓ What is prayer for you?
- ✓ What does prayer have to do with the pilgrim's search for God?

Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God.
(CCC 2559)

Cardinal Hume adds, "Prayer is *trying* to raise our minds and hearts to God."²

"The only 'failure' in prayer is when we neglect it. The only 'success' in prayer is the sense of God's presence, or a deep peace and sense of well-being, a marvellous moment of inner freedom. When that comes, it is a special gift from God. We can have no claim on it; we cannot demand it. Our part is to turn to him as best we can, trying to raise our minds and hearts to him."³

¹ Hume, *To Be a Pilgrim: A Spiritual Notebook*, 49.

² Hume, *The Mystery of Love*, 43.

³ Hume, *The Mystery of Love*, 43.

The Primacy of Prayer

“The failure to develop the practice of prayer in parishes today is responsible for serious spiritual malnutrition.”⁴

For reflection:

- ✓ Why do you think Cardinal Hume told his priests this?
- ✓ Has anyone ever helped you develop the practice of prayer in your life?
- ✓ Do you help others develop the practice of prayer? How?

Prayer and Friendship

“Friendships need space to develop and grow strong. Friends must waste time together. It is also thus in prayer. Prayer is making friends with God, and he with us. Prayer is trying to focus the mind on God, and to admit him into our hearts. Prayer is wasting time with God. Prayer needs space to develop and grow strong.”⁵

Cardinal Hume’s *Ten golden rules* for prayer:⁶

1. Plan to pray; do not leave it to chance. Select a time a place (a room at home, on the bus, taking a walk).
2. Decide on how long you will spend in trying to pray (five minutes, ten, fifteen, thirty or more).
3. Decide what you are going to do when you pray—*e.g.* which prayer to select to say slowly and lovingly; or which passage from the Bible to read prayerfully. Sometimes use your own words; sometimes just be still and silent. Follow your inclination.
4. Always start by asking the Holy Spirit for help in your prayers. Pray: “Come Holy Spirit, teach me to pray, help me do it”.
5. Remember you are trying to get in touch with a Person, and that Person is God—Father or Son or Holy Spirit. He is wanting to get in touch with you.
6. Don’t be a slave to one way of praying. Choose the one that you find easiest, and try some other method when the one you are using becomes a burden or doesn’t help.
7. Don’t look for results.
8. If you have distractions, then turn your distractions into your prayer. (If a car passes the window in the wrong gear, then say something to God about the driver—I mean a kind of prayer for the welfare of the driver, not necessarily for his driving or gear box!)
9. If you always feel dry or uninterested at prayer, then read a spiritual book or pamphlet. An article in a Catholic paper may be a help. Spiritual reading is important.
10. Trying to pray *is* praying. Never give up.

⁴ Hume, *Light in the Lord*, 17.

⁵ Hume, *The Mystery of Love*, 43–44.

⁶ Hume, *To Be a Pilgrim: A Spiritual Notebook*, 137. The *Ten golden rules* are all found on page 137.

FOR REFLECTION:

- ✓ How do you pray in the midst of days full of family, community, and work responsibilities?

Seeing with the eyes of Christ

“Try to see Christ in everyone you meet, especially the poor, the sick and the handicapped. Behave towards others as you expect them to behave towards you.”⁷

All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: *I was a stranger and you welcomed me* (Matt 25:35). Proper honor must be shown *to all, especially those who share our faith* and to pilgrims.
(Rule of St. Benedict 53:1-2)

FOR REFLECTION:

- ✓ What does it mean to see with the eyes of Christ?
- ✓ What does it mean to **see** Christ in everyone?
- ✓ How do you see Christ in **everyone** you meet? Think of someone in your life you find difficult, or someone who has shunned you, disagreed with you, received something that you think you deserved....how do you **see** Christ in him or her?
- ✓ How do you **see** Christ in people from other faith traditions? How do you **see** Christ in a person with no faith?
- ✓ How does seeing with the eyes of Christ help the pilgrim who “wanders through life, often limping, sometimes bewildered, at times quite lost”...the pilgrim who “is searching, often quite unconsciously, for something or someone to make sense of life, and certainly to make sense of death.”⁸

⁷ Hume, *To Be a Pilgrim: A Spiritual Notebook*, 112.

⁸ Hume, *To Be a Pilgrim: A Spiritual Notebook*, 38.

Seeing with the eyes of Christ, I can give to others much more than their outward necessities; I can give the look of love which they crave.⁹

FOR REFLECTION:

- ✓ How do you give someone the look of love which they crave?

**Let the Word of Christ, in all its richness, find a home in you. Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom. With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God; and whatever you say or do, let it be in the name of the Lord Jesus, in thanksgiving to God the Father through him.
(Col. 3:16-17)**

Dear Lord Jesus, make us people of prayer!

⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est*, December 25, 2005 (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2006), ¶18.