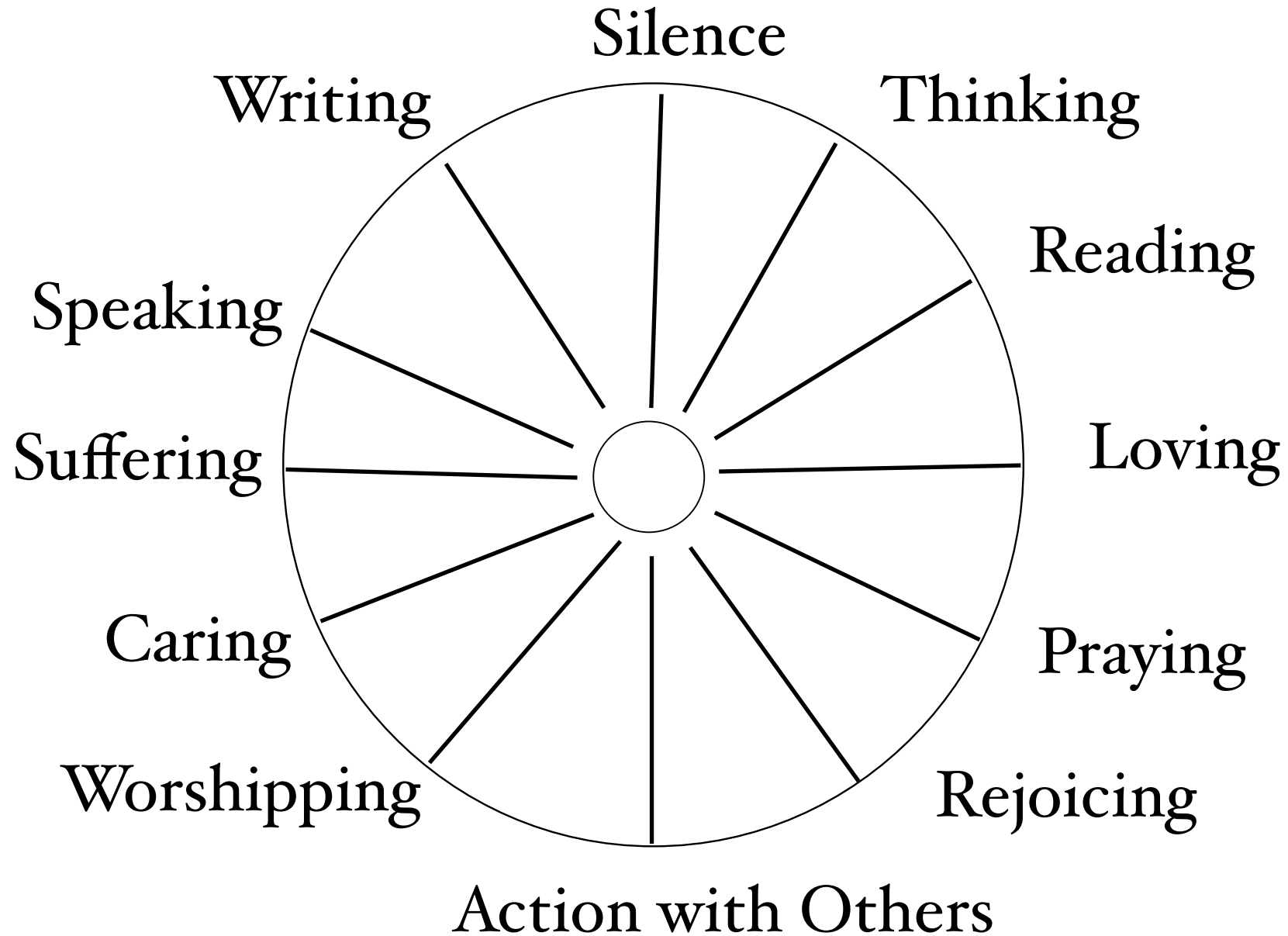


Prayer is Communion with God

Any experience can nurture prayer and be nurtured by it



James McAuley (1917-1976) on prayer

Incarnate Word, in whom all nature lives,
Cast flame upon the earth: raise up contemplatives
Among us, men who walk within the fire
Of ceaseless prayer, impetuous desire.
Set pools of silence in this thirsty land:
Distracted men that sow their hopes in sand
Will sometimes feel an evanescent sense
Of questioning, they do not know from whence.
Prayer has an influence we cannot mark,
It works unseen like radium in the dark.

(from *A Letter to John Dryden*).

- Past: dark, hurts, fear and reasons for fear.
- Future ?
- So live in the present. But paralysis?
- Present is not fixed: can be transformed, enlightened, healed seeds can be planted now
- Need an environment that is rich [contains seeds]
- Such an environment can threaten, because put self down in comparison

- So need for environment to be loving
= en-couraging/ warm/ accepting and believing
- We have little control over our environment
and have to learn to cope with the real.
- Need FAITH = risk letting love into the dark
- Need discernment/ patience/ but basic readiness
to trust when we discern that the environment is
trust-worthy

How do I grow in faith? Contemplation of Jesus

Initially looking out there to another

Insight into him

Maybe me? [Adulteress, Gadarene, Thomas, Paralyse]

Slowly the present is liberated to see grace in the
environment

1. Silence : Temptation to avoid it; too painful; fear; seek distraction. Keep yourself there contemplating: It is healing, confirming

2. Acceptance : They [blind man etc]were loved in their fear. Maybe me?

3. Hope

Vine-branches - fruit

Spirit-reed - music

Hands of Christ

Loaves and fish - service

Maybe me? Life-experience will confirm my hope.

4. Compassion

We are not alone

Jesus in agony, weeping, need

Others in need. Me?

5. Service :

- We find that we are able to provide a loving environment for others. This is healing of them and of us

- Others need my love

‘Jesus took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me” ’ (Mark 9:36-37)

‘I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me’ (Matthew 25:35-36).

‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ (Luke 22:19)

‘Love one another as I have loved you’ (John 15:12).

- Meditate on Philippians 2:1-8; Ephesians 3:16-20; Isaiah 58:6-11
- Qualities of love: 1 Corinthians 13
- Possibility of prayer: Galatians 5 = fruit of the Spirit
- Prayer issues in the fruit of love and in this I find myself

Jesus' prayer

‘In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed’ (Mark 1:35).

‘Jesus went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God’ (Luke 6:12).

‘Jesus was praying alone, with only the disciples near him’ (Luke 9:18).

‘Jesus said to them, “I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.” And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him’ (Mark 14:34-35).

Jesus lives in us

- Jesus' way of living : we are his disciples.
- Mystery is his union with the Father
- Our prayer is that we might be drawn more intimately into this communion = prayer
- It is a matter of penetration,
not change of direction from horizontal to vertical.
- Sometimes it requires that we be alone: silence
sea-depth below the constantly-moving waves.
- Watch Jesus: Baptism, Transformation, Agony, Cross

- Result of his communion = reign of God
- Vine-branches, reed of God, Divine fire

John Henry Newman

‘Dear Jesus,

Help me spread Your fragrance everywhere I go.

Flood me with Your Spirit and Life.

Penetrate and possess my being so utterly

that all my life may be only a radiance of Yours.

Shine through me and be so in me

that every person I come in contact with

may feel Your presence in my soul.

Saint Ambrose (340-397) on Prayer

“The Father and I will come and make our home with him.”

‘Let your door be open to him when he comes, open your soul, throw open your inmost mind, so that it may see the riches of simplicity, the treasures of peace, the sweetness of grace. Open your heart, meet the sun of eternal light that enlightens everyone. That true light, indeed, shines on all, but if anyone of you has closed your windows, you will rob yourself of the eternal light. Christ too is shut out if you shut the door of your mind. Although he is able to enter, he does not wish to rush in uninvited. He does not wish to force the reluctant ...

Saint Ambrose (340-397) on Prayer

Blessed are you at whose door Christ knocks. Our door is faith, which, if it is strong, fortifies the whole house. It is through this door that Christ comes in ... He visits those who are being tempted and in tribulation that no one may fall, overwhelmed by distress ... If you are asleep and your heart is not awake, he goes away without knocking; if your heart is awake, he knocks and asks for the door to be opened to him' (On Psalm 118. nn.12-14).

Ruth Burrows

‘Prayer is self-surrender to God at every moment; the reality of our prayer will be the reality of our self-surrender, not how we feel, what we experience, the lights we get and so forth. Prayer is necessarily hard because self-surrender is hard" (To Believe in Jesus page 85).

‘True prayer is a giving of self to God, an opening of the self to God, not a seeking to feel God and God’s action.’

‘Prayer is our saying Yes to God who is bending to us, offering us love, inviting us to intimate friendship.’

Elizabeth of the Trinity

‘Would that I could tell all souls what a source of strength, of peace and of happiness they would find, if they would consent to live in this intimacy. Only they do not know how to wait. If God does not bestow Himself in a manner that they can feel, they leave His Holy Presence; and when He comes to them with all His gifts, He finds no one there; the soul has gone out to exterior things. They do not dwell in the depths of themselves.’

(Letter to her mother, August 3rd 1906)

Anthony Bloom Courage to Pray page 5-6

‘Prayer is the search for God, encounter with God, and going beyond this encounter in communion ... It arises from the awareness that the world in which we live is not simply two dimensional, imprisoned in the categories of time and space, a flat world in which we meet only the surface of things, an opaque surface covering emptiness. Prayer is born of the discovery that the world has depths; that we are not only surrounded by visible things but that we are also immersed in and penetrated by invisible things.

Anthony Bloom Courage to Pray page 5-6

And that this invisible world is both the presence of God, the supreme, sublime reality, and our own deepest truth ... Living only in the visible world is living on the surface; it ignores or sets aside not only the existence of God but the depths of created being. It is condemning ourselves to perceiving only the world's surface ... The human heart is deep. When we have reached the fountainhead of a human being's life we discover that this itself springs from beyond.

Anthony Bloom continued

The human heart is open to the invisible. Not the invisible of depth psychology but the invisible infinite, God's creative word, God himself. Returning to ourselves is thus not a synonym for introversion but for emerging beyond the limits of our limited selves. Saint John Chrysostom said 'When you discover the door of your heart you discover the gate of heaven.' This discovery of our own depths goes together with the recognition of the depths in others. Each has his or her own immensity. I use the word 'immensity' on purpose.

Anthony Bloom continued

It means that the depth cannot be measured, not because it is too great for our measurements to reach it, but because its quality is not subject to measurement at all. The immensity of our vocation is to share the divine nature, and in discovering our own depths we discover God.'