

I

The topic for today is **powerful and effective prayer**.

Most of us struggle with prayer. All too often we find that our prayers amount to begging God for something. So many of our church prayers do the same and we know deep down that prayer must be more than this. Begging prayers actually miss the point of prayer completely. They have been connected for too long with a sense of inadequacy or a shopping list of wants. ***“Do this for me God and I will be good.” “Get me out of this mess and I will go to church every Sunday from now on.”*** We know how that turns out. We also remember the somewhat satirical begging prayer as a song by Janis Joplin,

*“Oh Lord won’t you buy me a Mercedes Benz.
My friends all drive Porsches, I must make amends.”*

Unfortunately prayer in so many cases gets reduced to treating **God** as a cosmic bellhop to do our bidding in times of crisis or laziness. And when it doesn’t work out that way, we ignore **prayer** as empty and ineffective until the next crisis or lethargy, and we start begging all over again. However, as the writer of James points out, **prayer** properly practiced brings our lives into healing, congruence and right relationship with **God** and one another. It is the opposite of begging prayers. ***“In prayer we don’t beg God for stuff, or give God instructions. We just report for duty. We show up, open to the mystery and paradox of prayer.”***

Mystical traditions within all the world religions are steeped in prayer in order to enter into a relationship with the **Mystery** in the midst of life. They seek in prayer to excavate the Dark Passions that separates us from **God’s Grace**. That causes us to treat the **Divine** and other people as servants of our superficial fears, whims and wants. So in prayer, Mystics seek through **examination, request** and a **listening heart**, the grace available to transform each Dark Passion into a congruent life of illumination. I’ve been calling this ‘radiant living’. I continue to find Caroline Myss’ book: Defy Gravity very helpful in this area. She recognized the connection between the Western Christian concept of the Seven Deadly Sins and the Eastern religious system of the Seven Chakras of the body.

This morning we will be looking at what she calls the initial three Dark Passions. All three might be strong in your life or maybe just one is more dominant. But we all struggle with them throughout our lives.

The first Dark Passion is **pride**. That is the shadow form of **pride** that causes us to treat **God** and others inappropriately and so keeps us alienated and afflicted. The root of the **dark passion of pride** is the fear of humiliation. We are caught in the **dark passion of pride** when we think, “*I’d just die if that happened.*” Or “*I just can’t face the consequences.*” It is like an animal instinct takes over to protect ourselves from that overwhelming fear of humiliation or embarrassment. Countries have and continue to go to war over the **dark passion of pride**: Lashing out in a vain attempt to avoid perceived humiliation. This is where we as individuals perfect the putdown or the insult.

Now progressive or emergence Christianity accepts truth wherever we find it, so for those interested in or aware of the energy system of the body as expressed by Eastern spiritual and healing traditions, the **dark passion of pride** is associated with our **root chakra** which is at the base of the spine. The **root chakra** is all about belonging, home and rootedness. Humiliation separates us from that belonging or enforces the boundaries of that belonging. Some of our greatest humiliations come from those closest to us. The consequences can manifest in immune disorders and the woundedness we carry within us.

Powerful and effective prayer quiets the chatter of the mind, opens an inner space to honestly review and evaluate our behaviour. When we honestly review how we treat others and how we treat **God**, while trying to avoid humiliation or embarrassment or rejection, we become aware that we are discounting and disrespecting others. We reduce people to labels or things, or inflate them into enemies or monsters.

So, **powerful and effective prayer** asks for the **grace of reverence**, the gift of **God** to see the sacredness of life, of people, of groups and relationships. It is what I have been calling *deep respect*. When we live in the grace of deep respect, our actions and attitudes change. Forgiveness occurs. Healing and belonging begin to abound.

Application for Today

What or who triggers **my pride, my fear of humiliation**?

Listen for insight and awareness.

Ask for the **grace of reverence, of deep respect** to transform you.

Sing: #400 Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying (x4)

Afterwards, we will all remain silent in prayerfulness.

I will repeat the Application for Today questions: sit in silence for 2 minutes.

Amen.

II

Powerful and effective prayer enters into a relationship with the **Mystery** in the midst of life. **“In this approach to prayer we don’t beg God for anything or give God instructions. We just report for duty. We show up open to the paradox of prayer.”** Part of this duty; is openness is to excavate the Dark Passion which separates us from **God’s Grace**. The Dark Passion that causes us to treat the **Divine** and other people as servants of our superficial fears, whims and wants. Through *examination, request* and *a listening heart*, we seek the grace available to transform each Dark Passion into a congruent life of illumination.

The second Dark Passion that keeps us from **God** and one another is **avarice or greed**. It is the shadow side of our need to create and connect. It is when we want or covet what isn’t ours, or when we have to have way more than is necessary. Some people are **greedy** for money, others for power, fame, attention or control--the list is endless. **Greed** is a form of insanity. There is never enough. In the midst of abundance those afflicted live in the scarcity model. And no one can be trusted until they get what they must have. We know the old saying, **“It is just me and Thee and I’m not sure about Thee.”** We also know advertisers thrive on this dark passion. **“Hurry! Limited time offer! Only a few... left.”**

This dark passion is associated with the **second chakra**, the power centre located in the lower abdomen. It is the energy centre in our body that resonates with our need for companionship and personal relationships. It also harbours all of our competitive instincts. So when we don’t get what we think we have to have, it can manifest itself in mood disorders, lower back, hip and reproductive issues.

Powerful and effective prayer asks for the **grace of generosity**, an **attitude of gratitude** in everything and for everyone. It begins by offering the benefit of the doubt to others. It desires less for oneself. It seeks a generous heart to give the best of ourselves to help others along the way.

Application for Today

What or who triggers my **greed**, my sense of scarcity, of there not being enough for me?

Listen for insight and awareness.

Ask for the **grace of generosity: an attitude of gratitude** to transform you.

Let’s do it right now. Silently go to that prayerful place deep within.

I will repeat the Application for Today questions: sit in silence for 2 minutes.

Amen.

III

Powerful and effective prayer enters into a relationship with the **Mystery** in the midst of life. **“In this approach to prayer, we don’t beg God for stuff or give God instructions. We just report for duty. We show up, open to the paradox of prayer.”**

Part of this duty; this openness is to engage the third dark passion, which is **Entitlement**. We know this as *‘my needs are more important than yours.’* Or *‘nothing bad should happen to me.’* Or *‘things should just work out the way I want them to.’* Or *‘I’m special.’* Or *‘the rules don’t apply to me.’*

Self-entitlement sets us up to have unrealistic expectations of others and to be endlessly disappointed. It also gives us permission to use or abuse others or situations to achieve our own ends, be they pleasure or power. This dark passion is associated with the **third chakra**, the seat of identity located at the solar plexus below the sternum. It is the energy centre in our body that resonates with our self-esteem, identity and personal power.

Stress related illnesses could develop in the grip of this dark passion. For **entitlement** generates great resistances to change. It is especially dangerous when health issues arise and require major accommodations that we feel entitled to ignore.

Powerful and effective prayer quiets the chatter of the mind opens an inner space to honestly review and evaluate our behaviour. It recognizes our insecurities, our entitlements to lifestyle and getting our own way. It admits our distorted concept of justice and our resistance to change.

Powerful and effective prayer asks for the **grace of understanding**; the ability to get out of ourselves and walk in another’s shoes. The grace that lets go of winning at any cost and seeks to understand what is fair for everyone. That grace of common sense that understands what it means, **“We are all in this together.”**

Application for Today

What or who triggers my **entitlement**, and how much of my frustration and anger is due to things not working out as I thought they should?

Listen for insight and awareness.

Ask for the **grace of understanding** to transform you.

Let’s go to that prayerful place once more.

Silently enter that prayerful place deep within.

I will repeat the Application for Today questions: sit in silence for 2 minutes.

Hymn #619 Healer of Our Every Ill. Amen.