

Sermon March 2023

Prayer & Silence

Prayer is like a conversation - a conversation with God, sometimes with myself, sometimes a conversation with others around me ... Part of conversation is listening. I have to be able to hear what the other person is saying. That is why silence is needed. Silence helps me to concentrate on prayer and to concentrate on listening. Silence helps to come to rest. To gather oneself. Silence can give strength... "There is strength in silence" is a German proverb.

Jesus recommends his disciples to go into silence for prayer. In the Gospel of Matthew he tells his disciples: "But when you pray, go must go into your room and close the door". That means, when you pray, find a quiet place where you are undisturbed, then go into silence.

And God can be experienced especially in silence. In the 1st Book of Kings, the story of the prophet Elijah is told. Elijah is full of restlessness and despair. He waits for a sign from God. But God does not come in a loud and violent way, not in a storm of fire, not in an earthquake. God comes in a gentle, quiet wind. God comes to Elijah in silence. Only in the silence does Elijah experience the closeness of God. Silence helps to pray. Becoming silent before God is already prayer.

Prayer as reflection

What does reflection in terms of prayer mean? What can prayer reflect? A story I read a long time ago comes to mind. It is set in Greece. The Greek island of Crete was invaded by the German army with paratroopers during the Second World War. There was a lot of resistance, heavy fighting and many deaths.

Alexander Papaderos, a Greek Orthodox theologian, was still a boy during the Second World War. One day he found the broken rear-view mirror of a German army motorbike. He picked up a shard of it and by scratching it on a stone he made it round. He began to play with it as a toy and became fascinated by the fact that he could reflect light into dark places where the sun would never shine. It became a game for him to get light into the most inaccessible places he could find..

Later, Papaderos became a founder of reconciliation work between Greeks and Germans and director of the Orthodox Academy on Crete. But he always kept the mirror piece in his wallet throughout his life. Sometimes he would pull it out to tell this story - with a special punch line. The mirror piece was a reminder to him that we are not the light ourselves. God is the light. But we can, like little pieces of mirror, reflect God's light into the dark places of our world so that it becomes brighter there.

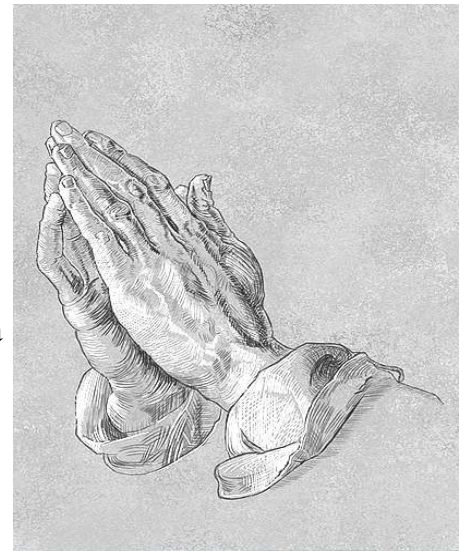
Prayer helps us to reflect on ourselves and our world. And with our prayer we reflect some of God's light into the dark places of our world and our lives.

Prayer & Community

"Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of you." This "multiplication table" from Jesus also applies to prayer: "Where two or three pray together in my name, there am I in the midst of you."

Especially in the prayer of intercession we think of the community with our fellow human beings. We pray for each other and with each other. We think of our loved ones, of friends and neighbours, of strangers and people in need. Prayer connects us.

And there is one special prayer that unites us with all Christians worldwide in every service: the prayer that Jesus taught us: Abba, Pater noster, Our Father, Vater unser ... For me it is always touching to pray the Lord's Prayer together - especially when I take part in a Church service in another language. Even though I may not understand much else, somehow it is always clear when the Lord's Prayer is prayed - the catchy rhythm and that everyone then prays and speaks together. We always pray together in our Church services and say the Lord's Prayer, the prayer Jesus has taught us, which connects us all as Christians - across linguistic, cultural and religious boundaries.



Yours Kai Thierbach