



Leaning Into the Heart of the Holy

2016 Lenten Devotions

Thursday

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Leaning Into Prayer

By Deborah Wright

My mother had a recent episode with her heart that gave our family quite a scare. She woke up one morning with her heart racing and "pounding out of her chest." She became dizzy whenever she stood. After I arrived at Mama's house, I called Jody and together we took her to the hospital. We assumed that her blood pressure was elevated, but while being assessed by the emergency room nurse, her condition took a turn for the worse. Her heart was out of rhythm and her heart rate was too high. Soon after saying she felt like she was going to pass out, she did.

My mind suddenly became a jumble of prayers. Please God, let Mama be okay. Please be with the doctors and nurses who care for her. Please don't let Mama be in any pain. Please help her heart rate go down. Please keep me strong. Later, as her heart rate began to decrease, her blood pressure dropped dangerously low. There was so much happening so quickly, and I felt I couldn't grasp it all. It was then that I let go and called on God to be with Mama through it all. Whatever happens, be with her and give her peace and let her know how much she is loved.

Her blood pressure started to return to normal and her heart rate began to stabilize. She still had an erratic heartbeat, but we were able to catch our breath and discuss with her what was happening. The cardiologist carefully explained atrial fibrillation, the options for treatment, and the associated risks. He listened to our questions and concerns, and we listened to his answers and explanations. He then turned his full attention to my mother and asked her to explain the things which were most important to her about her health and her life. In expressing her wishes, I heard my mother offering prayers of gratitude for her ninety-one years of life. She was truly grateful for her many blessings. I think in those moments she was also offering prayers of assurance that she was at peace.

Mama continued to improve and she was able to return home. Reflecting on these past several days, I have come to see them as a blur of leaning into the heart of the Holy. Sometimes, as during Lent, we make a conscious effort to draw closer to God. We become more aware of our prayer life, more conscientious about Bible study, more mindful of the wrongs we do, and more attuned to living in right relationship with God.

More often, however, I think our lives are a blur of leaning into the heart of God. We wake up to a sun-filled day and appreciate the beauty of our world while enjoying it all on a morning walk. We temporarily lose our way and ask for God's guiding light and grace. We get a phone call from a dear friend or family member and are grateful for the many shared memories and expressions of love. We feel restless and seek assurance and peace. A loved one is ill and we hope for healing and health. And we continually pray for hearts that are holy.

The wonderful thing is, God hears all of our prayers. At times our prayers are thoughtful and deliberate, while at other times our prayers are a jumble of thoughts and feelings. But we can go to God with them all, pensive or jumbled . . . every joy, concern, heartache, question, hope, confession, angry thought, and grateful praise. And every time we do turn to God in prayer, we lean in a little closer to his love and care.

Prayer:

God, through our fragmentary prayers
and our silent, heart-hidden sighs,
wordlessly,
your spirit bears our profoundest needs.

Deeper than the pulse's beat
is your spirit's speech,
making our human prayers complete
through prayer that is your own.

Let our jabberings give way
to the wordless hummings in our souls
as we offer our lives to you, our God,
whose presence makes us whole.

Sharlande Sledge

Prayers & Litanies for the Christian Seasons

Luke 11:1-13

It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples." And He said to them, "When you pray, say:

‘Father, hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
‘Give us each day our daily bread.
‘And forgive us our sins,
For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.
And lead us not into temptation.'"

Then He said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; and from inside he answers and says, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.’ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened. Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"

I Thessalonians 5:17

Pray without ceasing.