

“Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. Guide me safely through the night. And wake me with the morning light”

Ah, words of comfort...I think we all said, at least, some variation of this prayer as a child...It's called the Children's Bedtime Prayer.

This week's readings deal with hope and justice and, where I find the true common thread, is with the idea or concept of “connection to God”.

We're all looking and hoping to find some way to connect to our loving God....We did this as a child through the Children's Bedtime Prayer and through the many rote prayers that our parents, nuns, or CCD teachers taught us....These prayers gave us comfort and connection.

In tonight's First Reading of Deuteronomy, Moses is letting the people know that they can connect to God through the statutes and decrees, not of the land of Israel, but rather the statutes and decrees that he labels the law of God or the commandments of God.....Follow these and you will connect with God.

As we move to the Second Reading from James, we hear about the promise of God....Not so much through prayer or following commandments to through works of justice.....Caring for the orphan.....Caring for the widow....Focus on caring for one another, and those less fortunate, will help us be unstained by the world around us and connect to God.

Finally, in our Gospel reading from Mark, we hear about purification or insight into how to remain pure....I'm not going to go into all of those things we heard in the Gospel about evil thoughts, theft, murder, greed, malice, envy, and a whole lot more.....Rather focus on the use of one's heart to connect to God....For implied in this Gospel is the need for us to do that.

When we go to bed at night, are we still saying some of the rote prayers from our childhood...Prayer is certainly good as it offers us hope and connection...But are there prayers that we can be offering that get created by us and by the use of our own hearts and minds...Prayers that really make sense to us and feed us, particularly as LBBTQI Catholics and our allies.

Do we get fed by the prayers that we say all of the time? Perhaps the child does get something or feels some connection by say a prayer like "Now I lay me down to sleep" but how is that connection sustained throughout our lifetime.

When I was growing up, my mom said the Rosary...In connection with that she used the Glorious, the Sorrowful, and the Joyful Mysteries....As rote as it was for me, I think she felt a connection to God by praying this way....But she also did many things that I would argue made her connection to God even stronger....Teaching CCD to young children, Joining the Women's Guild, and physically caring for the church, ensuring its cleanliness and functionality....These were ways that connected to God, other than prayer.

Is our praying still childlike?

Is our praying still rote?

Do you take the time to pray in truly meaningful ways to feed you and help others?

In this community of Dignity/Boston, I'd guess the answer is "yes" to the next question:

Do you move beyond prayer to do God's work?

Are we doing the work of justice, by using our hearts?

Here at Dignity, we often talk about doing God's work through the use of our time, talent, and treasure....All of us gifted in some ways in at least one of these areas.

How are we able to do God's work of helping the widow or the orphan that feeds us and helps others at the same time?

Well, in this community, when asked that question our mind often times goes to the "big stuff" that we do...

Cycling 100 miles to the Cape to fight HIV

Serving food weekly at the Friday Night Supper Program

Joining the Liturgy Committee or the Executive Board

Singing in the choir

All of these are wonderful things to do and ways to connect to God while doing works of justice

But on this day...The day of the third anniversary of my dad's passing...In his honor I'd like to remember the little, simple things that can be done to help others and connect to God...Because that was what my dad did....That's what worked for him to make powerful changes in the world...

Remember that small things have ripple effects.

Here's just a few things to think about but feel free to come up with your own:

Listen to someone deeply....Whether you agree or not with the way they think....Ask open ended followup questions that will get them to talk even more, and give you better insight into why they might feel the way that they do...Remember, this may be the first time they have been thoroughly listened to in their whole life....You are giving them a

gift....They are giving you a gift....This has a ripple effect....It's doing God's work of care and respect for one another.

Smile at people....Older men, younger women, children....Yes, sometimes there is a look of fear that is returned ...But, often times, you'll be surprised....That smile will be shown right back at cha....It's addictive and it helps change the world one person at a time.

Share with someone that you care about, what you appreciate about them....Give them a verbal list of all of the different ways that they make a difference in your life...Yes, through non-verbal communication they may already know but I'm quite sure that they will enjoy hearing it out loud.

And when someone is about to pass, if you have the opportunity...hold their hand....It may be the last time that they feel the gift of human touch...And it will help make their transition easily while giving you the gift of God's grace at the same time....Don't be afraid....Just do it.

Connection to God

Creative Prayer

Hope

Justice

Making a difference

Good News!