



August 21, 2022 – Pentecost 11 (C)
Gifts to the Church by Episcopal Convents and Monasteries:
St. Gregory’s Abbey of Three Rivers, Mich.

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What is contemplative prayer?

Contemplative prayer can be defined briefly as: *quietly resting in the presence of God without use of words.* At St. Gregory’s, time is specifically set aside each day for this practice, but it goes way beyond that. Contemplative prayer is a basic disposition cultivated through attentiveness to God with the goal that it will permeate the whole day and the whole life of the person practicing it. The Daily Office, held seven times a day at St. Gregory’s, is the backbone of the practice of contemplative prayer. By reciting and singing the psalms day in and day out with their pleas for justice and thanksgivings for deliverance, we are taken into the heart of human relationships with God. The Office is itself a contemplative exercise where we use the words of God in scripture to take us beyond

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the words into the presence of God. Worship in words and beyond words builds up the contemplative disposition that extends to manual labor and human interactions, especially pastoral interactions.

What good is contemplative prayer?

The worth of contemplative prayer cannot be measured by pragmatic considerations. We say and do many things throughout the day, many of which have value. Unfortunately, we tend to rush to get things done. We fill ourselves with agendas for other people and then push these agendas against them with force. This approach, in the end, leads to violence. We leave no room for God when we go on like this. Instead, we need to allow God to make space within us where we can let go of all our agendas and just be with God. The more we wait on God, the more we allow other people to be in God in deep peace. In so doing, we will never know what God does in the silence and it is essential to our surrender that we never know. It is as the Psalmist says: “Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you” (Ps. 73:25).

What is the community involvement?

The whole community participates in contemplative prayer as each member sets aside time for waiting on God, but more importantly, each of us supports one another in contemplative living through the practice of silence, especially at night, so as to create space for each other and for our guests and to create space for God.

Learn more about St. Gregory’s Abbey at
<https://www.saintgregorysthreerivers.org>.

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