

Did you notice, in that passage of St. Matt. X<sup>t</sup> said WHEN  
you pray, not IF you pray?

Monday, August - 3  
9/11/67  
28.7.69 (part 1)

A couple of years ago, I was preaching a parish retreat or mission in a small country parish in Ireland. Part of the work on these occasions is to visit, in their homes, the old and sick, ~~and~~ lonely and infirm people of the parish — those who would not be able to come to the church for the evening Mass and special sermon which were the ordinary exercises of the week's mission. They always appreciated being able to meet and talk to a visiting priest; and being mostly, in that parish, simple down-to-earth country people, you sometimes got real pearls of spiritual wisdom in those few minutes' conversation. I particularly remember one <sup>cheerful</sup> old lady, bedridden for many years, who told me she found that praying was one of her best habits — she'd often tried to give it up, but just couldn't; and so she was still at it, though it never seemed to make much difference to her life what she prayed about. But in fact, she was ~~one~~ one of the most deeply calm and happy people I've met. She knew how to pray — though I doubt if she'd have been able to explain how. For her, it was as natural as breathing.

One of the troubles a lot of us have about prayer is that, even unconsciously, it's often an artificial exercise. We forget, in practice anyway, ~~who~~ who we're talking to —

and especially, that a conversation is a two-way thing. Our Father in heaven has a lot to say to us too, if we'd only listen, keep our ears, and eyes, open. So, if you only try to pray when you want something, you're missing more than half the point of being in touch with God. Jesus X<sup>t</sup> did tell us to ask for what we want, & of course we sh<sup>d</sup>. do so — but that's not the sum total of prayer or of His teaching about prayer either.

To be in touch with God our Father, whom we only meet and see (in this life) in our fellow-men and in the events & circumstances of our life. To listen also, to what He has to say to us — in H. Scripture which is His word, in X<sup>t</sup>'s life words & work, in all of creation which is His gift to us, made by His word.

You can pray anywhere, at any time if you're alive to people & things around you, if you learn to recognize God's voice in the speech of men, God's hand in the shaping of your life, God's love in joys and sorrows which are pt. of every human experience, God's plan for you & the world He made, even thro' the stupidities and the men made by blundering men. And just like ~~an~~<sup>an</sup> old, long-married couple sitting quietly together in a room at evening, not saying anything because there's

no need for words, you don't <sup>always</sup> need words, especially long & complicated ones, in order to communicate with God. Knowing His love, recognizing His gestures, His appearance, His closeness can be enough. We can do this, because X<sup>t</sup> is in us, & it is in Him & thro' Him that we are in touch with ~~God~~ His Father and ours.

"X<sup>t</sup>. in me ... [Breastplate]