

Faith on Fire
The Second Step
A Commitment to Prayer and Reflection

Last week, I wrote about the need to be *committed* to renewal since there can be no renewal without commitment to renewal. Once we begin the process of renewal, we need to let God lead us to where God wants to lead us, *not* where we want God to lead us! We must be committed to renewal. This week, I want to discuss the need for prayer and reflection in our lives. The reason for this should be obvious. If we do not pray, if we do not have a prayer life, we will not have an intimate relationship with God through Jesus Christ. And if we do not have such a relationship, our lives will not be renewed.

How often do you pray? How do you pray? These are important questions that each one of us must answer. Once we answer them, we can begin the process of entering into a deeper prayer life that will change, transform, and renew us.

How Often Should We Pray? We should pray daily, without exception. Imagine two people living together but never speaking or communicating. That is the situation of those who do not pray. God is present to them every day whether they realize it or not. But they ignore that presence, the gift of God's love, because they do not pray. Prayer is something we need to do every day if we want to be in communion with God.

When you pray is not as important as making sure you pray. Morning and evenings are good times for me to pray, but they may not be good times for you. I like to give the first word of the day to God. Before I do anything else, I pray. I like to give the last word of the day to God, and so, before I retire, I pray. I also pray during the day. Throughout the day I am in conversation with the Lord, asking for help, expressing my fears and joys. This is what Saint Paul means when he exhorts us "to pray always!"

How Should We Pray? There are many ways to pray, not just one. There are formal prayers we have learned from our youth such as the *Lord's Prayer*, the *Hail Mary*, the *Glory Be*. We should pray these prayers every day. There are other prayers that play an important role in Catholic life such as the Rosary. But prayer is essentially conversation with God, and sometimes the best prayer is our own prayer. The best prayer of all is *silence* in the presence of God. Be still, and let God be present to you. Be still and listen. If you do not listen, if you are always speaking, you cannot hear God.

Pray with scriptures, especially the Gospels and the Psalms. Read a portion of the Gospels or read a Psalm *slowly*. Reread it. Reflect on it. Ask what it means for your life. Then sit in silence, and let God Word penetrate the depth of your heart.

Finally, when you pray, pray to God the Father through his Son Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit that makes our prayer possible. All our prayer is brought to the Father

through his Son Jesus Christ. We pray to the Father, through the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

This Week's Strategy for Renewal: Set aside ten minutes in the morning and ten minutes in the evening for prayer. Sit in God's presence, making God your refuge and strength, and in *silence* listen to what the Lord says to you so that you can be renewed and your faith on fire.

Father Matera