



**GERARD
MAHONY CP**

100 RANDOM THOUGHTS ON PRAYER

FORWARD

It is seventy five years since I first heard of meditation.

At St Brigid's School, Marrickville in 1939, Fr Augustine CP came to talk to the boys in the senior class. He asked me what I was going to do with my life. And I said, "I would like to be a Passionist."

I don't know where those words came from, it wasn't me! The next day I went round to the Monastery, and asked to speak to Fr Augustine. I asked him if he could forget what I had said yesterday.

He responded: "Could you not try it out?"

I said "I suppose I could try".

Seventy-five years later I'm still trying.

In the meantime, I have learned a little about prayer that I would like to share with anyone who wants to read on.

When I first started this project, I thought I might have close to thirty or forty quotes but it has turned into 100 random thoughts.

I would like to thank Fr Erick CP and Anne Ferguson for the time put into typing this document and Anne for the photos.

Gerard Mahony CP

Marrickville Passionist community

Email: tonymahony22@hotmail.com

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1. Prayer is the filter through which we view the world.

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2. Prayer helps us to see life in fresh ways.

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3. Prayer shows us who God is.

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4. Prayer helps us to see that each day is holy.

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5. Prayer is not dependent on mood.

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6. Prayer doesn't mean having God on our terms.

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7. We must pray when we cannot; let God pray in us.

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8. Sometimes we don't like to lose control and let God.

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9. Sometimes it is difficult to remain focused; too much is happening around us.

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10. In a busy world it is hard to find time.

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11. Good feelings aren't always present in prayer.

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12. We don't find it easy to sit still.

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13. It is easy to become discouraged; no one can tell us that prayer is easy.



14. Meditation is not meant to be a monologue, just ourselves talking. It is a conversation, as Teresa of Avila says. God wants to talk to us. We might wonder at that thought. All through Scripture God speaks to many people. We find it everywhere, and God hasn't become mute since. Of course, I won't hear if I don't believe or if I am not quiet enough.



15. It is important that we know and appreciate that meditation is directed at union with God. God wants this very much. God wants to build a relationship with us and obviously God can't do that against our will.



16, Noel Davis, in Heart Gone Walkabout writes: *"Every muscle of my being longs to be a chariot of fire, to stretch out like a graceful athlete, flowing down the back straight - strong, supple, relaxed in body and mind, thrilling in the power, pleasure and freedom of every stride, one with the Divine."* '



17. We have to ask ourselves: 'When I pray, to whom am I speaking? Is it to God or to myself?



18. Meditation can lead to disillusionment. The devil doesn't want us to pray. So he can step in and convince us that prayer is not our thing. He can make us believe that we are just wasting our time and that we might as well let the distractions fill our minds.



19. We should not be surprised if we cannot grade our meditation 10/10 every time. We are changeable people and we can't predict how this meditation will influence our lives.



20. Peter was not always the rock as his name suggests. He denied his master three times. And even in the worst times, Jesus was loving him; God was always loving him. We, like Peter, are weak, fragile, sinful creatures. And yet God continues to love us. We, like Peter, might ask God to go away from us, but God won't and never will.





21. Jesus continues to draw us close. What a magnetic personality he possesses. He can walk up to a person, who is a dedicated fisherman, give him the nod and the man will leave his nets, his livelihood, and follow him. He simply had to do it.



22. Meditation is not simply saying prayers, thinking thoughts; it is, rather, taking a stance. It is a way of living in the present, living in an awareness of this Presence.



23. It would be good before going to prayer if we could bring our true selves, but that is not possible. Anything that we can imagine about ourselves, it's only imaginary. The mystics tell us that the real self is not this, not that.



24. Meditation brings us into close union with God. Does that frighten us? God is all powerful and certainly wants more and more from us! Is there no end to it? This can evoke feelings of fear of the Lord. We can become afraid of God, and what might be wanted from us. Remember Oscar Romero, the Spanish martyrs, and the Passionist martyrs! Is it safe to put ourselves into the hands of the living God? In the book of Jeremiah (29:11) we read "Surely I know what plans I have in mind for you." Yahweh declares plans for peace, not for disaster, to give us a future of hope.



25. Silence helps us to avoid distractions, it helps us to focus our busy minds. The mind is always doing something. Silence includes not just, not talking.



26. Praying leads us to put on the mind of Christ, especially when he said: "Whoever will save his life will lose it." (Matt 16:25); In other words, it leads to death to self, voluntarily relinquishing a part of our lives, in order to actualise a larger, more permanent one.



27. In Gethsemane Jesus surrendered his own will to accept what the Father wanted





28. This morning I was heading for the chapel to pray. As I approached the door of the Chapel, it opened, and Jesus was standing there. He had a great grin on his face. He welcomed me and said my name. He took me to my usual place and said, "Let's pray together." Was this a dream? Or is that how it happens every time I go to pray?



29. Who am I as the meditator? If we were to describe ourselves, how accurate would we be? If we went to the spiritual director and described ourselves as someone we would like to be, the director would prescribe for that imaginary person. Does that mean we shouldn't have a spiritual director? No. There are certainly times when we need someone for guidance.



30. Maybe we forgot or didn't know that the journey of prayer has its dark moments. St John of Cross call these 'dark nights' St Paul of the Cross calls them 'mystical deaths'.



31. Paul of the Cross had no daily papers, no house phone, mobile phone, no computer, no iPad or iPhone, but he received a lot of mail. Sometimes he was replying to letters when the Matins bell rang. But he was not free from other distractions that he had to face.



32. It might be that we are still praying as before, but prayer is a progressive thing, a growth.



33. Joyce Rupp says: "Every time you listen with great attentiveness to the voice that calls you 'my beloved', you will discover within yourself the desire to hear this voice for longer and more deeply."



34. God said to someone: "The noise of the world makes it hard for me to be heard."



35. Affections we offer in prayer might be love, sorrow, humility, gratitude, praise.





36. We are surrounded by God's love. As we breathe in, we are conscious of God's love filling us. As we breathe out, we let go of any anxiety, distraction or resentment.



37. In *The Cloud of Unknowing* we read, "Lift up your heart to the Lord with a gentle stirring of love, desiring him for his own sake and not for his gifts. Centre all your attention and desire on him, and let this be the sole concern of your mind and heart. Do all in your power to forget everything else, keeping your thoughts and desires free from involvement with any of God's creatures as they appear."



38. In an interview with Sr Joan Chittister OSB, she was asked how she could live a contemplative life with all the work she had to do. She replied, "For me, leading a contemplative life is being a person who sees the world as God sees the world. It is putting on the mind of Christ."



39. Prayer opens our minds to the reality of God's great love for us, and makes us aware that God's love is working through us to bring human life to full growth.



40. We have to begin prayer with the quieting of our minds and bodies.
Be still. Rest in God's loving embrace.



41. In the first book of the Bible, God says to us "Know that I am with you. I will protect you wherever you go, and bring you back to this land. I will never leave you until I have done what I promised you."
(Genesis 28:15)."



42. Imagine we go to prayer like an empty vessel that needs to be filled.
God is willing to fill it.





43. One image of God is as an eagle. A parent eagle teaches the young eagle to fly by taking it up high and letting it go. What joy for the young eagle to find that it can fly!



44. We come as sinners to pray, but the Lord doesn't want barriers. So God wipes our sins away and lets love go free in us.



45. Sometimes we think God has gone away from us. But where can he go? God is everywhere.



46. The story is told that St Francis was walking around Assisi and he stopped to speak to a bird. If we were there, we might have thought him mad. But Francis was revealing a mystical experience. The whole of creation is made by God. God is in all that is made made. It shows us that we can find God everywhere.



47. Hearing God's voice is hard enough, but what about hearing our own souls? It wants to speak to us as well. It has exalted things to say. But as with God, we won't hear if we don't believe.



48. Sometimes we think back to our first profession and wonder what plans we had for ourselves at that time? How long did it take for us to become jaded? Prayer can refresh our spirit and reinvigorate our enthusiasm.



49. Prayer enables us to face and deal with our fears - fears that we don't have enough, fears that we need more for our basic needs. Prayer leads us to replace this fear with faith in the Divine.



50. We can sit and wish that we could pray like the saints. But they only did it by constant prayer. There was and is no other way.





51. You might have to say sometimes in prayer, the words of the prophet Samuel: "Speak Lord, your servant is listening."



52. Many of the saints of the past tried to identify with the sufferings of Jesus. They wanted to put on that figure as literally as possible.



53. St Therese of Lisieux: "The Lord does not expect great deeds and profound thoughts, neither intelligence nor talents; he just looks for simplicity."



54. The Passionist Founder said: "We are in God's presence. We are more immersed in God than fishes are in the ocean."



55. "Walk before me and be perfect." (Gen. 17:1).



56. Tauler; "A state of divinity arises in the soul from the continual thought of God."



57. When I was a novice in 1941, the novice who was in charge of the bells that week had to announce the presence of God when the chimes sounded.



58. You know, in prayer, that God is calling you by name. You know you need to nourish this deep relationship with God.





59. It is impossible to know where God will lead you, where you might be taken. What is God asking of you?

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60. Silence is like a pick-me-up for the soul. Confucius called it *the one and only voice of God*.

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61. Could this be the day that the Lord will say to us: "Pay out the nets for a big catch."

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62. Meditation is like a death to self.. We let go of selves, our fears, our needs, our daydreams. We trust in the goodness of God.

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63. Prayer is not only a sharing in Christ's death, but also in his resurrection. We come away and something is different about us.



64. St Paul of the Cross wrote to Agnes Grazi on 16 December 1738:
"Remain in the presence of God in loving silence with a pure and simple loving attention to the Infinite Good, letting your soul rest in holy silence on the bosom of the eternal God."



65. We once had at Marrickville an Irish Passionist who gave us a retreat. One day he said that charity was more important than prayer. So it was okay to leave prayer to perform an act of charity. But, I think, we could easily make that an excuse.



66. In prayer we have to manage the clutter of distractions. They happen to everyone. When they come, we have to gently move back to meditation. If they are very persistent, we might have to make them the matter of our prayer.

67. Prayer has to be constant. We can't expect to grow in prayer if we only use it occasionally.



68. In prayer we should not cling to the way we always prayed. There will always be room for growth.



69. Seeing that prayer is also the work of God, we should not forget gratitude.



70. Attachments are not a help to prayer - in fact they can become a hindrance to our becoming an intimate companion to God.





71. Sometimes we fear God because he might take away our possessions.



72. We all leave pieces of our lives in various places - memories, successes, wonderful experiences.



73. Prayer leaves us open to hear God's call. We never know what that call may be. It might put our whole life plan on the line.



74. *The Cloud of Unknowing* says; "It is futile to contend with stray thoughts. In doing this we compare ourselves with God. We need to make ourselves completely supple in God's hands. When this attitude is authentic, it is the same as self-knowledge, because you have seen yourself as you really are – less than nothing without God. When God sees you standing alone in this truth, he cannot refrain from hastening to you."



75. When we experience illuminations, the first reaction is fear. As God reveals something of Godself then comes a deep peace and union with God.

76. We must walk in God's presence as Abraham did. To walk in the presence of God means to live in such a way that all our thoughts and plans are continually guided by God.



77. When recollection ends as we pray, fire it again with bursts of love.



78. Self-knowledge and self-acceptance are part of the experiences of solitude as they are of intimacy.



79. Many years ago we had an Irish singer come to Marrickville and stay at the Monastery. He sang everywhere he went. He said that if he failed to sing every day, his singing became defective. I think it is also true of meditation. If we neglect it, we will notice the difference.





80. Sometimes we lose our patience with God. We want God to speak to us right here, right now.



81. Silence is an important companion of prayer. Yet often we don't know what to do with it. But silence is the discipline of the mystics. Taking up silence is essential to prayer and meditation.



82. No matter how advanced we become in prayer, there could be times when might we are wasting our time.



83. Recollection is most important if we are to pray well. St Paul of the Cross called this 'the science of the saints.'



84. Paul of the Cross said: "Whoever would dwell in the heart of Jesus must remain undisturbed by any trial whatever." "Remain in the state of complete indifference, no matter what happens." "Let all things be as they happen."



85. Prayer's function is not to change God but to change ourselves.



86. Martin Luther said: "I have so much to do that I will spend three hours in prayer."



87. Darkness in prayer seems so out of place. But truly, it is a sign of progress. It seems, at times, so useless. But when we look back on those dark days, we come to see that they were times of rich progress. Sometimes, it forces us to seek God with greater effort. And that has to be good!



88. Getting involved in prayer can demand great courage. Getting to know what God has in mind for us can be very challenging.



89. Be joyful, always, pray at all times, be thankful in all circumstances. This is what God wants from you in your life in union with Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)





90. Claude Monet once wrote that he owed it to the flowers that he became a painter. I wonder what part of creation formed our soul?

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91. *"To receive mercy from someone else is to learn humility; to extend mercy to others is to learn something about the nature of God. It is very hard to say which learning is more important."* Joan Chittister

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92. St Paul of the Cross wrote about interior recollection: *"Would that I might go from east to west to make known the great gift that we carry around within us."*

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93. When we recite the Hail Mary, we ask for some special needs – Pray for us sinners NOW and at the HOUR OF OUR DEATH. But is that the only time we talk to our heavenly mother?

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94. One important prayer is asking to be really open to the experience of divine love. Pray that you will be aware of this grace that comes from God.

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95. Prayer is personal growth. It brings us to the ultimate and the eternal.



96. Prayer immerses us fundamentally and truly in the Divine. It is not meant to be a bridge to somewhere else because God is here! Prayer is the act of beginning the process of becoming one with the One we seek – eventually melting into God completely. This can be accomplished through immersion in the Sacred Scriptures. As Christians, what drives us is not how Jesus died but who Jesus is and why he died. How he defined life and death will become our own understanding if we live prayerful lives.



97. Thomas Merton writes: *"Do not depend on the hope of results. You may have to face the fact that your work will be definitely worthless and even achieve no results at all. As you get used to the idea, you start more and more to concentrate not on results but on the value, the rightness and the truth of the work itself. You gradually struggle less and less with the idea and more and more with specific people."*



98. Merton also wrote: *"My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not know the road ahead of me. I cannot know when it will end. Nor do I really know myself. And the fact that I think that I am following you does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. I hope I have that desire in all 'I am doing. I hope I will never do anything apart from that desire."*



99. *Eveready* is a wonderful name for a battery in Australia. But its name is not always fulfilled. Sometimes, it loses its power. But God is ever-ready; we can depend on that.



100. God is always present to us. God is around us, in us, in every part of our being. God holds us in a tight embrace. Can we doubt God's love for us?

