

“Joy”

Tools that might help us:

Movie: Where There is Darkness (a film about forgiveness)

A documentary about murdered Catholic priest Fr. Rene Robert and his plea from beyond the grave to save Steven Murray, the man who killed him.

Book: A Daybook of Prayer (daily scripture, prayer and meditations)

Book: The Cloud of Unknowing – anonymous; from the middle ages. 4.3 stars/nearly 2,800 reviews. Available online and also in pdf form: <https://www.catholicspiritualdirection.org/cloudunknowing.pdf>

Written in Middle English in the latter half of the 14th century. The text is a spiritual guide on contemplative prayer in the late Middle Ages. The underlying message of this work suggests that the way to know God is to be courageous enough to surrender one's mind and ego to the realm of "unknowing", at which point one may begin to glimpse the nature of God.

It is an English monk's sublime expression of what separates God from humanity. This beautiful contemplative resource, has been embraced for hundreds of years for its simple, engaging style and spiritual truths. As the unknown author assures us, "if you are to experience Him or to see Him at all, insofar as it is possible here, it must always be in this cloud."

Finding Inspiration and Making the Most of Prayer Time:

- **“Keep the sails up” – be ready to ‘catch’ God when He comes by.** Catch the wind or it will blow right by us.
- **Extracts from Blaise Pascal’s encounter with God** (which occurred during the time of enlightenment and questioning of the reality of God. Also, he was not particularly spiritual, but kept notes of his encounter in his coat sleeve as a reminder for him):

FIRE. Certitude. Certitude. Emotion. Joy. Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy.

- We do not need to come to prayer already ‘clean’... Psalm 51 – create in me a clean heart.
- Being contemplative and in prayer doesn’t mean that we have it all figured out. We can bring our imperfections and our gifts *as we are*.
- We can grow beyond our imperfections through Reconciliation (confession) – it is humbling and healing.
- Prayer is not formulaic; it does not need to take on the same method each day, but it should seek to help us get away from ourselves and be ready for God.

Familiar prayers can be our ‘comfort food’, settle us down, bring us to a point of reflecting on God.

- St. Teresa of Avila – rain from above vs. water from the well. When the well runs dry we rely on rain from above.
- Our prayer has to manifest in how we live. We can grow through prayer – slowly begin to change our response to a situation... begin to back away from our old habits. If there’s not change in how we live, how earnest is our prayer?
- Write down our experiences... our encounters with God → it is hugely important, particularly over time.
- Mary shows us immense trust. In her ‘dark night’ she had the capacity to move forward even with uncertainty and lack of continued consolations from God.
- We need each other; we need the community of the church & Church.

Mass is a community praying together.

The sign of peace: comes from Jesus first after the Consecration. At Mass: ‘Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your Apostles: Peace I leave you, my peace I give you; look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with your will. Who live and reign for ever and ever.’ Amen. ‘The peace of the Lord be with you always.’ And with your spirit. ‘Let us offer each other the sign of peace.’ Peace be with you.

We share in the peace offered from Jesus and extend it to others – to all. Beyond those immediately nearby but beyond as well... we offer peace and thus forgiveness.