

Catholic Faith Corner

Understanding, Teaching, and Living the Faith

Sea of Galilee at Sunrise



[HOME](#) [ABOUT](#) [ARTICLES](#) [BOOK LIST](#) [BOOK REVIEWS](#) [SPEAKING/EVENTS SCHEDULE](#) [TALKS](#) [CONTACT](#)



Where's God When You Can't Pray?

by KATHLEEN GLAVICH, SND on [AUGUST 26, 2015](#)
in [BLOGS](#)



Lately I've been writing books on prayer, in particular about praying on empty. Maybe you can identify with this: During your prayer you keep checking the time and the minute hand seems barely to have moved. You understand why St. Teresa of Avila shook her hourglass as she prayed, attempting to speed up the time. Instead of enjoying time with

your Lord, you are restless and your mind is full of distractions. You don't sense God's presence, and he certainly isn't speaking to you. It's as though you are talking to yourself. Periods of dryness in prayer are frustrating and confusing. You might think that God no longer loves you or maybe you did something to displease God or, worse yet, maybe God doesn't exist!

Take heart! This experience, which is compared to going through a dry, hot desert with no oasis in sight, is a normal stage in prayer. St. John of the Cross talks about the Dark Night of the Senses and then an even more advanced stage reserved for a few, the Dark Night of the Soul. This latter stage is what Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta experienced for decades from the time she had the vision to work with the very poor



Mary Kathleen Glavich, SND

I'm a Sister of Notre Dame, of Chardon, Ohio, the author of seventy-plus books on religious education and spirituality, including a novel, *The Fisherman's Wife: The Gospel According to St. Peter's Spouse*. I enjoy giving talks and am a pastoral associate at St. Dominic Church.

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until the day of her death. The world was shocked to learn this when her personal letters were made known. More impressive is the fact that from the cross Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

Not being able to pray can be due to natural causes. A traumatic event, such as the death of a loved one or learning that you have a chronic disease, might lead to dryness in prayer (or have the opposite effect). Stress, overwork, and fatigue are other possible causes. Then too, an addiction, a habitual sin, or an attachment to something other than God can build a wall between you and God.

On the other hand, this feeling as though you are not praying at all could be a sign that our mysterious God is at work in your life. You are not really backsliding on your journey to God. Why would God make us think he is absent? To purify us and bring us to a more mature spiritual life. Prayer is a grace. We must realize that God is the utterly other, all-powerful partner in the communication we call prayer. He calls the shots. When he chooses to play hide-and-seek, we come to a deeper understanding of God. Fr. Thomas Greene suggests that we just go with the flow: float on the current. Spiritual writers say that the darkness that overcomes us during prayer is really "luminous darkness" because we are aware of God in a way that is beyond our natural senses, that transcends our minds. When we feel that nothing is happening, it could be that the most important things are happening.



Having to struggle with prayer is spiritual suffering. Like all suffering, it can be united with the suffering of Christ and contribute to the redemption of the world. Still, it doesn't hurt to complain to God as the psalmist did, "How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?/ How long will you hide your face from me?" (Psalm 13:1-2).

When undergoing the test of dryness in prayer, one must be patient and persevere. So what if you're not in the mood or don't get anything out of prayer? Keep in mind the basic principle for all prayer: Seek not the consolations of God but the God of consolations.

What helps you when you feel like you can't pray?



About Sister Kathleen Glavich, SND

Jesus ordered us to make disciples of all nations and teach them. Mary Kathleen, a Sister of Notre Dame from Chardon, Ohio, responds to this call through writing, speaking, giving retreats, and teaching. Her motto, adopted from Eddie Doherty's gravesite, is "All my words for the Word!"

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Gabrielle Renoir August 27, 2015 at 2:23 am



Sometimes I think people don't realize that just being with God, letting his presence sweep over us and fill our soul is prayer. We don't always need words, we need the experience of God. There is never a time when I don't want God as my companion in life, but there are times when I find praying to him with words just doesn't suffice. At those times, I try to just remain silent and listen. I feel my love for him, and his for me. There are times when I don't feel like getting ready to go to Mass. I love Mass once I'm there, but getting ready is sometimes burdensome. At those times, I hear Christ's voice, loud and clear, asking, "Can you not spend even one hour with me?" And of course I answer, "Yes, I can."

REPLY

Kathleen Glavich, SND August 27, 2015 at 9:44 am



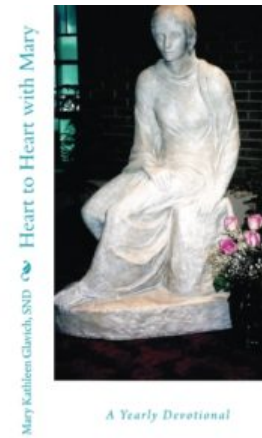
Thank you, Gabrielle, for your thoughtful response. I especially like the idea of hearing Christ's question when you don't feel like going to Mass.

REPLY

Gabrielle Renoir August 31, 2015 at 12:22 am



I always feel like going to Mass, Sister. 😊 The part that can be burdensome to me is getting ready. Trading my comfortable jogging pants and tee-shirt for attire more respectful of Our Lord and his house, doing my hair, which is very thick and waist length, etc. It's especially burdensome on a hot summer day because our air conditioning is broken. But I hear (not actually hear, just in my mind) Christ ask,



Newest Book

In "Heart to Heart with Mary: A Yearly Devotional" Our Blessed Mother speaks to us every day of the year and a suggestion is provided for a response. It is similar to the popular book "Jesus Calling" and can be found on Amazon or purchased from me.

Featured Book

Totally Catholic! A Catechism for Kids and Their Parents and Teachers

Do you wish you had a simple, child-friendly summary of what Catholics believe? This book took first place in the Association of Catholic Publishers awards 2014 in the category of Children's Books. It can be purchased from Pauline Books and Media or from me. (\$14.95)

A Heavenly Book

Do you believe in angels? Most people do. The Catholic Companion to Angels offers heavenly facts about these majestic creatures, confirming that you can turn to them for help. Uniquely, The Angels comes with three covers (statue, stained-glass, or painting). Choose the one you like best.

“Can you not spend even one hour with me?” And sometimes, “Do you love me?” Of course I can and I do, so I get ready and go to Mass, and I always feel such peace and love there, in Jesus’ presence, that once there I don’t ever want to leave!



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My First Novel!

The Fisherman's Wife is the story of St. Peter's spouse, the long-suffering but delightful woman who puts up with Peter and his obsession with the itinerant preacher named Jesus. Through her we meet Peter, Jesus, and other biblical characters. In Capernaum she witnesses Jesus' healings and hears his words. The book is based on the Gospels, legends, and what is known about first-century Jewish women. The rest is sheer imagination. Order directly from me FOR AN AUTOGRAPHED COPY at kglavich@ndec.org.

A Bit of Humor

A Slow Student During indoor recess, the third and fourth graders were playing school. Taking part in the game, the teacher, Sister Janet, sat at a child's desk. Adam, who was playing the teacher, came up to her and asked, "And just how many years have you been kept back?" (from "Why Is Jesus in the Microwave?")

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About the Sisters of Notre Dame, Chardon, Ohio

The Sisters of Notre Dame of Chardon, Ohio, belong to an international congregation of more than two thousand apostolic women religious. We are one in mind and one in heart for the transformation of the world in Christ.



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