

Dear People Whom God Loves,

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE PRAYER

The way that I understand spiritual experience and prayer is this. I see them as closely interwoven. Perhaps they are even the same.

It helps me to understand this as my image of God has changed from a supreme being up there to infinite love that is not a being but spirit. No form, no shape, no physicality, but real.

It helps me when I realize that our human love is also spirit. Our human love also has no form, no shape, no physicality, but is real. Indeed we can express our love physically though our words, actions and touch. These physical expressions are valuable and I would say crucial for us to live humanely. These externals are not the love. Love is spirit that shows itself through the externals.

The external spoken words “I love you” can be said without love behind them. That is very different from the words “I love you” with love behind them.

This helps me understand that love is spirit; it is real but not a thing. I would say that it is the deepest reality in what it means to be human. Without love our world would be barren. Without love would there be no deep meaning to life?

It helps me to ponder the scripture “God is love”. God is real but not a being. God is the love that holds us in existence that surrounds us, that lives in all of creation, and in a special way lives in us humans.

This understanding is crucial for me in understanding spiritual experience. (That doesn't mean that others wouldn't understand it from another perspective.)

A helpful image for me that points to the spiritual experience/prayer is the words of two songs that paraphrase the experience of Isaiah the prophet. “As a child rests in his mother's arms so will I rest in you. I will never forget you my people. I

have carved you on the palm on my hand. ..Does a mother forget her baby or a woman the child within her womb? Yet ever if these forget, yes even if they forget, I will not forget my own.” I see God’s own as all people.

This spiritual experience/prayer is sometimes deeper and more real than at other times. It is an experience that I know that I cannot earn or take credit for. It does not make me better or worse than anyone else. It is a gift for my spiritual journey. The journey of each person is unique. Each person receives the gifts for this journey. They will be quite different. To compare them to see which is better is foolishness to me. I do think, however, that there are pieces of others journey that we can find helpful.

Another part of this experience is that God is not a tribal God. This ultimate love is not confined to one religion or to the way a person practices their religion. It is not confined to people who believe in God. It is not confined to any race or ethnic group. It is not confined to any kind of status.

It is not my God. It is our God. Everyone is included.

It is the experience of resting in love. Of being known exactly who I am – that I am not the false image I have of myself. That I am loved for who I am. That I am not the actions I have chosen regardless of whether they are good or bad.

This means that I am not judged, so it is safe to see the wrong paths that I have taken. And I am willing to allow ultimate love to heal me, to heal me and to help me take a more loving path just because it is good and loving. And to be willing for ultimate love to transform me however ultimate love chooses to do it.

This healing process is complicated by the fact that I resist it. I resist it because I don’t want to let go of my ego. Ego has a place in our human journey but ego is self-centered and that self-centeredness blocks loving. To be God-centered means to be everybody-centered.

I also resist the healing because of the many human drives that are in themselves valuable but want their own way even when they lead to unloving actions.

When I am drawn by my ego and other human drives, I become blind to how I hurt people.

A further complication to the healing process is that when I become healed in an area, another unhealed part of me surfaces and the process continues.

I also am certain that the healing will not be finalized by the time I die. I also believe that ultimate love will continue the healing process after death until it is complete and I receive the gift of resembling, as much as is possible for me, the infinite mercy and compassion that ultimate love is.

I also believe that ultimate love will do the same for everyone. Isn't it true that when we deeply love someone that we want healing and not punishment? Ultimate Love is infinitely deeper than our love and would logically be inclined to wish for our healing and not our suffering.

I also suggest that it is advisable for us to surrender to the healing as much as possible during our life on earth. I think that is good not only for us but for the people around us.

I suppose that because we are free – we must accept that it is theoretically possible that it will not be the case for everyone. However, because it is theoretically possible that salvation is not for everyone, does not necessarily mean that it isn't true - that all will be drawn into salvation.

I think that this is what Fr. Karl Rahner meant when he said “we have to believe in hell but we don't have to believe that anybody goes there”.

Since I see prayer as our willingness to allow ultimate love to heal us as we rest in that love, the spiritual experience and prayer seem to be to be united.

Smile, God Loves You,
Father Clay