

Seeking Serenity Amid the Noise

The problem we have living in this hurly-burly world is that there seems to be no quiet place where we can listen to the Divine Teacher speaking softly inside the depths of our soul.

Day after day we are on the move, tossed here and there by the currents of our lives, grasping at this or that so that we might be secure, and always failing because everything we grasp at is as transient as we are. Far from any special words soothing the discordant disruption of our days, there seem to be too many words in our lives. We are surrounded by noise, shouting voices screaming endlessly . . .

“Let us look within ourselves,” Augustine said, “and see whether there is some delightful hidden place where we can be free of noise and argument. Let us hear the Word of God in stillness and perhaps we will then come to understand it.”

Surely, his prayer for relief from noise is a good one for all of us still struggling for the serenity of eternity in the midst of noise.

Day By Day With Saint Augustine
Fr. Donald X. Burt

A Spiritual Attitude: Willing to Give Attention

The key word in talking about this aspect of the spiritual attitude is *willingness* – willingness to give attention, willingness to be one-minded. We often start with only the intention. Sometimes it takes years for that intention to transform into consistent, daily practice. For a long time after I decided to start a daily spiritual practice, that practice was likely to show up more times than not as something I hadn’t done. I often felt discouraged; but then I heard someone say that everyone is always a beginner in matters of the spirit. After that conversation, if I skipped my spiritual practice, I would just start over the next day, a beginner again, willing to give attention, to be as one-minded as I could possibly be.

Your spiritual life, then, is not defined by how totally you give attention or how one-minded you manage to be when you first begin, but by your willingness to give attention to God.

A Sacred Primer, The Essential Guide to Quiet Time and Prayer
Elizabeth Harper Neeld

Another Possible Conclusion

There is another possible conclusion to your prayer. Perhaps you have heard nothing. You may feel frustrated and angry because all you thought about during your prayer time was your shopping list or your job or something else seemingly unrelated to God. The server was down; the Internet crashed; all the links were inactive.

For those of us who have grown up in a society that places ultimate value on “getting things done,” the experience of “nothing happening” is maddening. However, such “failure” is a normal part of our fallen human condition. If encountering God’s Word were easy, there would be no need to practice prayer! Prayer is not a product; it is a relationship. Even if you did not experience the wonderful event you imagined, God knows your intention. You wanted to spend time with Jesus, and in some way, although exactly how is a mystery to you, you did. So express your frustration to God; ask for help and for the strength to try again. God does not require that we be successful, just faithful.

Creating a Life with God, The Call of Ancient Prayer Practices
Daniel Wolpert