

THE OVERLOOKED PIECE

Being in Prayer

by Mary Sharon Moore

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“I pray a lot for God’s will in my life,” one person said to me, “and I keep waiting for something to happen.”

“I want to be a religious,” someone else confided, “but I can’t find the community that fits right.”

“Jesus is coming,” a T-shirt reads, “look busy.”

Finding our place and staying busy are motivators in our contemporary culture. Doing something, anything, can be a narcotic, dulling the pain of the poverty that lies at the core of being human, lulling us into believing that if we stay busy enough, everything will come together.

But prayer, like vocation discernment, doesn’t work that way. Prayer first is a way of being; specifically, of being receptive to God. Prayer without ceasing is not an endless multiplication of words, but a fundamental stance, the habitual posture or attitude of receptivity, of openness to God’s encounter with the soul and with the whole of one’s life. Doing something cannot

fruitfully precede, much replace, being someone—a particular one always in relation to the Other.

“To pray is to make a place for God to enter our lives,” writes Augustine Ichiro Okumura, OCD, in his little book *Awakening to Prayer*. At the heart of prayer is encounter. Prayer is as much about capacity as it is about content. “What did you pray about?” someone could ask you as you emerge radiant from this prayer of encounter with the mystery of God. “I don’t know,” you might answer, “but it was real.”

Being in prayer is an orientation of the inner self toward God, even in the crush of daily life. And this orientation of the soul toward God, entering into that intimate communion of the Holy Trinity, is participation here-and-now in our eternal calling.

This first and foundational element of vocation, communion in God, must be in place for the other two elements—vocational lifestyle, and ministry or mission—to come forth and animate our baptismal life in fruitbearing ways.

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