

day's business. For as Isaiah says "we stumble at noonday as in the night,"¹ and "the sickness destroyeth at the noonday."² It is at noon that "the flock [of Christ] are made to rest,"³ at noon the great light fell from heaven and converted Saul,⁴ wherefore we are bidden by Jeremiah, "Arise let us go (in prayer to heaven) at noon."⁵

Evening prayer is of exceeding profit.⁶ For the night with all its perils approaches, and we know not whether we shall awake on the morrow. The Jews were ordered by Moses to wash with water that they might be clean, at the going down of the sun,⁷ how much rather should the Christian then cleanse his conscience from the pollution of sin contracted during the day. "In the morning," says the Preacher, "sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand,"⁸ and the best seed is that of prayer. It was in the evening that the hand of the Lord rested on Ezekiel,⁹ that Christ was alone for the most intimate converse with the twelve,¹⁰ that He came after the resurrection to His apostles,¹¹ and that He

¹ Isaiah 59:10

² Psalm 91:6

³ Song of songs 1:7

⁴ Acts 22:6

⁵ Jeremiah 6:4

⁶ 1 Chronicles 23:30

⁷ Deuteronomy 23:11

⁸ Ecclesiastes 11:6

⁹ Ezekiel 33:22

¹⁰ Matthew 14:15

¹¹ John 20:19

went in to the disciples at Emmaus.¹² As Goliath defied Israel morning and evening,¹³ so does Satan approach at these times to assault us, therefore "in the morning, and evening, and at noon-day will I pray, and that instantly; and He shall hear my voice."¹⁴

From Sabine Baring-Gould's

The Golden Gate

Fr. Baring-Gould is most famous for his hymn, "Onward Christian Soldiers".

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Edited by Fr. Peter Geromel, OHI Th.M.

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¹² Luke 24:29

¹³ 1 Samuel 17:16

¹⁴ Psalm 55:17-18



Prayer and Scripture

By Rev. Baring-Gould

Author of

"Onward Christian Soldiers"

Prayer is the elevation of the soul to God in entreaty for mercies, for the warding off of evils, and in thanksgiving for mercies already received. St. Augustine defines it as “the ascent of the mind from the terrestrial to heavenly things.” Prayer is either (a) vocal, or (b) mental. Vocal prayer is that in which words are used to express the needs of the soul.

Mental prayer is that in which the soul stretches towards God, with groanings that cannot be uttered.

Mental prayer is the most perfect, but it is also the most difficult kind of prayer. St. Theresa, one of the greatest masters of mental prayer, was for many years quite unable to attain to it.

2. Prayer may be made in any place.¹⁵ Daniel prayed in the lion’s den, the three children in the furnace of fire, Hezekiah on his bed, St. Peter in the water, Jonah from the fish’s belly.

But though prayer may be made anywhere, it is *better* made in solitude. “I will allure her (the soul) and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her.”¹⁶ Thus our blessed Lord retired into the wilderness to pray,¹⁷and also to a

mountain apart;¹⁸ and as He practiced retirement, so did He recommend it.¹⁹

Prayer may be *best* made in a Church, for that is the House of God specially set apart for the purpose. “Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.”²⁰ The purposes for which prayer should be made in God’s House may be gathered from the consecration prayer of Solomon.²¹

3. Prayer may be made at any time,²² as praise is ever offered in heaven by those who “rest not day and night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, etc.”²³

Prayer however is best made at fixed times, morning, noon, and night; or at the seven canonical hours.

From the earliest ages certain periods of the day have been set apart as stated times for prayer. David was accustomed to pray “at morning, at evening, and at noonday.”²⁴ Daniel also “kneeled on his knees three times a day.”²⁵ But David

also said, “seven times a day do I praise Thee.”²⁶

4. Morning prayer is of great excellence. “We must prevent [precede] the sun to give thee thanks, and at the day spring pray unto Thee.”²⁷ “Arise, cry out in the night; in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord; lift up thy hands toward Him.”²⁸ “Let us get up early to the vineyard,” says the bride; “let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth;”²⁹ that is, the soul declares that she will rise early to the vineyard of her spiritual cultivation, and examine whether the grace of God flourishes, virtues blossom, and good works abound. See Christ’s example.³⁰ Noon prayer is advisable as a recollection of the soul and mind from the distractions of the

¹⁵ 1 Timothy 2:8

¹⁶ Hosea 2:14

¹⁷ Matthew 4:1

¹⁸ Luke 5:16

¹⁹ Matthew 6:6

²⁰ Isaiah 56:7; Matthew 21:13

²¹ 2 Chronicles 6:12-42

²² Luke 18:1

²³ Revelation 4:8

²⁴ Psalm 55:17-18

²⁵ Daniel 6:10

²⁶ Psalm 119:164 cf. The Golden Gate: Part II. Devotions. The Canonical Hours. “It has always been the custom in the Church to use offices of prayer at special times in the day . . . ‘Who is it,’ says St. Jerome, ‘that knoweth not the ordinary hours of prayer to be the third, the sixth, and the ninth hours?’ as they are the most eminent parts of the day to distribute and distinguish the public affairs of men, so have they been accounted the most solemn time of prayer and divine duties in the Church of God.”

²⁷ Wisdom 16:28

²⁸ Lamentations 2:19

²⁹ Song of songs 7:12

³⁰ Mark 1:35