

Praying as Doing

A Memoir by Sister Alana



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God's Call

At that time, when I grew up, there was only one choice for women. That was either get married and have kids or be an old maid, and nobody wanted to be an old maid. So that wasn't really a choice, because then you spend your life apologizing that you couldn't find a man. It's different now, and young women can choose to be career women or choose to be independent, but it wasn't in my time.

I never wanted to get married and have kids. When I realized I could join the convent, it was wonderful. I hadn't thought of it for a long time. I didn't think about it at all. I think the Holy Spirit decided it was time for me, as my sister said, time for me to "jump off the merry-go-round and get serious". So, there it was: I had something I could do besides getting married and having kids, and it was wonderful. I think that's why I was always happy, I thought that the grace of God and the grace of vocation was very strong to be able to be able to jump from being so happy and involved and running and doing everything to the cloister mentality and stay there for years. It was very structured, very strict, very enclosed.

My relationship with God

I know the presence of God is part of me. I am very lacking in stress. I hardly even know what stress mean. I think that's the gift that God has given me. Sometimes, I'm worried about things—I'm not indifferent to this world, but I don't feel stress.

For me God is all-present. This debate of over whether God is male or female to me is not an issue because God's all present, like in spirit – always here, always there, with us. Even though I had to do things I certainly never would have chosen myself. Never, never. But it always turned out alright. One I got into it, it was always alright, but it was God's presence. I think God guided me towards what the next thing was, and accept what I had been doing. But in all of this, I never had any doubts. I never had that confusion about what asking me to do. As I said that was kind of my gift from God. It was a very good gift!

I would have a hard time isolating it (relationship with God) to a "this" or a "that." How I see my relationship with God is total: it's not up or down or when I'm praying or when I'm not praying. My prayer has changed just as I've changed; it's adjusted with my intellect, need and with my aging process. It's kind of like a little hermitage, my apartment is by itself, it's wonderful. I can be my own hermit and I can sit here with the clouds or the lake, or whatever it is. And I can be on retreat all day if I want to. I love living alone because it's very monastic. I can make it as monastic as I want.

Relationship with God and Social Work

My social work certainly did make praying easy. I certainly did have a lot of things to pray for. I had a real affection for the people who were struggling. I wanted to help them. For

me praying is also doing, praying isn't just mediation. For me prayer would be trying to think of one more thing I could do, or call one more agency, or one more assurance I could give to those people.

God and Struggles

There's people who say "Oh, if there is a God, why did He take my father?" and, "If there's a good and kind and loving God, how could He make my mother die when she has three babies to raise?" I don't feel that at all, I never did. I never did feel that was God's decision, turning on the poor mother who got cancer. I don't see it that way at all. I see it as global, ever-present, not as an incident, or that I have to bargain with God, such as petitioning, "Let me get into the Law School Lord!"

Blessings

I think the Lord has been very kind and gentle to me. He made me accept whatever it was, accept my life and be happy with it. I have acceptance of who and what I am. I say now this golden age is really a golden age. Each phase has been good.