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TEN EXCUSES FOR *NOT* PRAYING

BY JEROME KROPP



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If you're anything like me, sometime in the last couple of hours you had an opportunity to pray but let it slip away. Why do we do this?

We know that, as Christians, we're called to pray. We hear it from the Church, from the saints, at Mass, during homilies, and, most of all, from Jesus himself, who was often "going off by himself to pray" and exhorting his disciples to do the same. Last but not least, we're urged by the Holy Spirit, who is "sent among us," sent to "lead us" and to kindle in our hearts the inspiration to pray at all times (including when we're getting chewed out by our boss, disagreeing with our spouse, and falling behind on our to-do list).

WHAT'S STOPPING US?

Quite a lot, it turns out. And it's not just that we're distracted, worldly, anxious people and lousy pray-ers. There's the influence of evil in the world and in our lives, evil that would like to see us turn away from prayer, permanently if possible. No one's saying it's easy; we have our work cut out for us.

Here are my Top Ten Excuses for *Not* Praying. I came up with the list not through reading theology, spiritual classics, or modern psychology, but by doing them all at one time or another (OK, many times).

10. **I don't know where to start.** Perfect! If we're good enough at this excuse, we don't need any others! Just don't start. Unfortunately, this one is easily eliminated once and for all. Just ask for God's help. Seriously, that's it. "God, help me pray." Asking God to help us pray is a wonderful prayer. God loves to help! Now that we know where to start, this reason is off the list.

9. **I don't really know how to pray. All I know about prayer is what I learned as a child—the Our Father, Hail Mary...**

And what's wrong with that? Wasn't the Lord's Prayer Jesus' answer when asked "How should we pray?" We might feel that the Hail Mary is too simple and, perhaps, beneath us. I've learned that no prayer is beneath me.

Take the things we learned as children—saying please and thank you and I'm sorry—and we have three things that, turned into the simplest of prayers, are relevant at all times: "Thank you, God" "Please help me, Lord" "I'm sorry, God." We can always add the specifics of the moment to these simple prayers. We all have things we should be thankful for, things we need God's help with, and things we should be sorry for. There's no such thing as a prayer that's too short or too simple. God hears and loves them all.

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