

# Prayer Course: Week 5

## Service of others as prayer

### Introduction:

Prayer and service are deeply intertwined in Christian thought, and prayer that does not change our behaviour towards one of service is questioned in the Gospels and the Letters. Service can be done in itself as an act of prayer, through the deliberate offering of that service to God and the noticing of God with you while you are serving.

### Background:

Many groups over the years have been inspired by this connection between prayer and service: the Franciscan order is founded on this as a basis for the rebuilding of the Church, and many Christian groups have held service as a cornerstone of their mission, for example, the Salvation Army, the Little Brothers of Jesus, and the French worker priest movement. Foundational to this route into prayer is the understanding that prayer is an action of the spirit, away from concern with ourselves and towards God, and so physical acts that take us away from focusing on ourselves, and that we then offer up to God as done for others in his name can become an effective form of prayer. As a result the more anonymous, less self-serving, and more menial the act is, the more effective it tends to be as prayer (although any act of service can be offered up in this way). The key thing is to not do it for any kind of personal gain or reward, physical, social or psychological.

### Purpose:

This exercise is designed to teach us to give our service to God, while abandoning our sense of self importance and our desire for reward.

### Process:

- Discern what your act of service is going to be the you will offer to God as a prayer. I have found collecting the rubbish from an area of street that is not my own very effective, but you may well already be serving in some way and wish to offer that up to God as a prayer.
- Pray that God will draw you to himself through your act of service.
- While serving try to notice God's presence with you.
- Pay careful attention to your task.
- Pray for those connected to your task, for instance if picking litter pray for the people who made the objects that are now rubbish, for those who dropped them, for the people on the street.
- Try to keep you service private and just between you and God.
- Give thanks that you can serve and for how others serve you.
- Finish with the Lord's prayer.

### Further reading and resources:

'The Little Flowers of St. Francis', Saint Francis of Assisi

'Love's Endeavour, Love's Expense: The Response of Being to the Love of God', William Hubert Vanstone