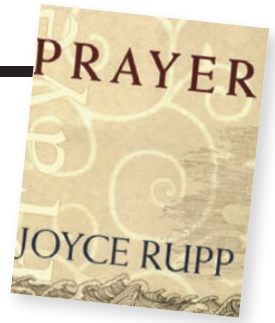


# BOOK REVIEW

## Prayer By Joyce Rupp

Orbis Books | Maryknoll, New York 2007 | \$10.00 Paperback

By Thomas E. Little



Sr. Joyce Rupp offers a slim volume with a disarmingly simple thought, "Our yearning for God is never fully satisfied," prayer is our consistent response to God's persistent invitation to be part of God's great mystery.

"... we realize prayer is bigger than we are, more expansive and deeper. When we least expect it, our prayer brings us into further clarity about who we are and how we are to be with God and the world. These experiences encourage us to lessen our stronghold on wanting to control, to know and have proof .... (and to) leave the *finished* product of prayer to the One who knows the longings of our heart."

Admitting that prayer is baffling, uncertain and impossible to fully explain is part of letting go of control. Yet, there are other prayer dynamics to explore: passage into the God-relationship that challenges, comforts and changes us; traveling the ebb and flow of our insights and experiences in a growing relationship; examining alternating fullness and frustration as we enter God's mystery; and, with compassion, moving deeper with awareness into our world.

She contends prayer is the response that sustains our relationship with God. How we pray (reciting the psalms alone or with others, using repetition of a word or phrase in meditation, walking meditatively, savoring the beauty of the natural world, repeating written prayers of others, journaling, sitting in solitude and contemplation, praying the rosary, celebrating the Eucharistic liturgy or other sacraments, reading spiritual books, or calling upon God in times of fear and panic) is not the issue. It is prayer if it

invites *us* to enter God's way. That is the measure.

I find the third chapter especially enlightening: prayer as vigiling with mystery. Poet John Shea notes times when "we come home to the deepest center of ourselves as the human spirit opens into the divine spirit," when we look, listen, and foster a "reflective awareness" with God and enter mindfully into the mystery of the spirit's stirring. Joyce Rupp encourages us to courageously choose the prayer that best opens us to God's voice, whether in smooth or cluttered circumstances or in times of "bleak prayer" when we are too weak and full of ache to cry out. We pray to remember that God invites through our weal or woe, and, in the unexpected moment, draws us closer. Prayer surprises us with the presence of the Beloved and sustains our commitment to be ready; the rest is up to God.

Joyce Rupp writes simply and honestly and the book is a meditative walk, a prayer on prayer. Each chapter begins with poetry and ends with questions and prayer to raise awareness and celebrate the source of awakenings received with gratitude. The clear, thoughtful reflections carried me from interested observer to grateful participant. It is a welcome resource for those wishing to better understand prayer as a portal to the deeper experience of surrender and intimacy with God, who alone satisfies the longings from which I pray. ✨

Thomas E. Little, Ed.D, is Executive Director of Bon Secours Spiritual Center.

Prayer and other works by Joyce Rupp are available in the bookstore for your purchase and use.