

Thy Kingdom Come: Day Two

Praying with our senses

The Other by R.S.Thomas

There are nights that are so still
that I can hear the small owl calling
far off and a fox barking
miles away. It is then that I lie
in the lean hours awake listening
to a swell born somewhere in the Atlantic
rising and falling, rising and falling
wave on wave on the long shore
by the village that is without light
and companionless. And the thought comes
of that other being who is awake, too,
letting our prayers break on him,
not like this for a few hours,
but for days, years, for eternity.

Praying with our senses reminds that prayer is not just something we do with our mind. Our senses provide us with the images and experiences that we put into words or thoughts. We can bring all that we are into our relationship with God: indeed God who created us as we are, can use every means to reach us.

One way of using our senses is to help us prepare for a time of pray. Take a few minutes to be still and slowly bring your attention to what you can see around you, what you can hear, what you can smell, anything you can taste, what you can feel on different parts of your skin. These sensations may lead you straight into prayer, or they may give you a sense of present focus for your planned prayers.

Another thing to try is to choose one sense to pray through. Here are some ideas. I have listed ideas for each sense, but I understand that for some people it will not be comfortable to use one or more of these senses – so as with all the ideas this week, please only choose what is beneficial to you.

Sight: find a piece of art that you enjoy and give it your full attention, how might it draw you towards God?

Sound: listen to a piece of inspiring music and let it lead you into prayer

Smell: If you have a scented candle you might like to light that and see how the scent makes you feel about prayer. Or what about a brief pause for prayer as you take in the smell of your coffee, or some other daily and homely aroma.

Taste: Its interesting how many times in the Bible God's presence is described as like a taste- often like honey. Linger over eating something you love and find God in that pleasure.

Touch: Even the traditional act of putting our hands together to pray brings touch into action. You might like to pray with a hand on your heart, or holding something like a traditional holding cross, or something more mundane like a smooth stone or a mug of coffee, to see where that takes you in prayer.

You may find that the sense experience opens in you a prayer in itself – not needing further thoughts or words.

God bless