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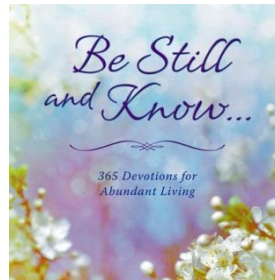
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Devotions..?

St Teresa of Avila once said: From silly devotions and sour-faced saints, good Lord, deliver us!” Teresa wasn’t just a good jokester. She also was a fierce reformer, who didn’t have any time for false piety. But the word piety and devotions are used in many different ways and throughout history have been both a challenge and a point of dispute. In the 16th Century there abounded many false claims of revelations and practices that were no more than simply a misunderstanding of genuine piety and on occasion, resembled superstitions. Many of her Sisters in the Convent had little education and these superstitions often resulted in drawing her young novices away from true prayer and growth.

The word ‘devotion’ means to be committed to something or someone with love. We often speak of either husband or wives as being devoted to each other, in other words loving each other. It is also used to state a deep concern for something or someone. For reason that can be rather strange it has also been seen as a over reaction to togetherness and almost ‘a fault’. The word ‘piety’ has received the same negative treatment and restricted to those whose religious expression is somewhat diminished and fruitless. It has also sadly been used to denote the religiousness of older women and men. This has been therefore led to a rather judgmental attitude to those who are genuinely pious and devout.

The word ‘Piety’ has a few meanings and one definition states the quality or state of being pious: such as fidelity to natural obligations (as parents) dutifulness in religion and devoutness. Here we have both words used interchangeably. Surely these definitions point to something of value and not to be dismissed or abandoned. Over the many centuries there have been many debates about the value of devotions and rifts often occurred between those who were in favour and those who were rather dismissive.



In recent times this has been the case and there is a notion that after the Vatican Council of the sixties these were treated as non-essential and pushed out of the sphere of true reflection and a means of prayer and spiritual awareness. In many ways everything that was not scriptural was pushed into a bag called ‘pious practice’ and for quote ‘simple folk’...and not to be encouraged generally. This then made many genuinely good people feel abandoned and rejected.

Now clearly, as already stated we must be careful not to confuse a wrongful attitude to devotions as being central to our faith as Christians. There can be nothing more important than Scripture, the Gospels,

The Eucharist and especially the Mass and Sacramental life. However that which can enhance any understanding of any of these can only be of help to the individual.

We also have to be very careful as to what we define as mere ‘piety’. The Rosary is considered by many, especially in the West, as a ‘mere’ pious practice (not true in other parts of the world). That not only shows a radically limited understanding of its history, but also its essential purpose to give people an insight into the main events in Jesus’ life and is fundamentally based on Scripture. Yet many would have it a pious practice of no relevance today. There are many saints who have reached heights of holiness through its use. St. John Paul II has devoted an entire apostolic letter to this popular devotion, the Rosary, calling, on bishops, priests and deacons “to promote it with conviction” and recommending it to all the faithful.

He said: “*Confidently take up the Rosary once again. Rediscover the in the light of scripture, in harmony with the liturgy and in the context of your daily lives*”.

The devotion to the ‘Sacred Heart’ is another, which became essential to reject the heresy of Jansenism. Similarly, the devotion to Divine Mercy.....

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True devotion to Mary leads us to Jesus St. Louis de Montfort

so integral to our understanding of the nature of God himself as 'full of Mercy', has been given the cold shoulder by many... yet the notion of a merciful God is mentioned 356 times in the Bible. We have to look no further than the Psalms, *'Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good: for his Mercy endures for ever'* (Psalm 107). Should we really dismiss these as mere devotions... And should we not be aware of God's merciful love at this point in our history?

Similarly there are many others. Devotion, for example, to a certain saint's life can inspire us. Devotion to an aspect of Jesus' Passion surely is an essential part of our Faith. Isn't the 'Pieta' a core focus of our pity for the Lord's suffering and the pain of His mother. There are devotions to Mary as the mother of the Redeemer and a valiant woman and a help to us as mother. The litany of our mother gives us titles on which to ponder. Many people find pictures and small objects such as crosses a great help as many are visual reminders of God's presence in their lives. We all respond in a different way to God's Grace and anything that promotes a deeper realisation of the Divine is surely to be encouraged...

Key to all this is the centrality of Jesus and Him in the Trinity. If our devotions take us away from the Gospel, then they are to be treated with caution and great care. They should never substitute for the teaching of Jesus or our devotion to him.

All devotion should enhance our faith not be a substitute for it.

The Second Vatican Council is often accused of taking away so much of what people liked. This is particularly true of devotional practice yet the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council recognised the importance of popular devotions in the life of the Church and encouraged pastors and teachers to promote sound popular devotions.

They wrote... "Popular devotions of the Christian people are to be highly commended, provided that they accord with the laws and norms of the Church."

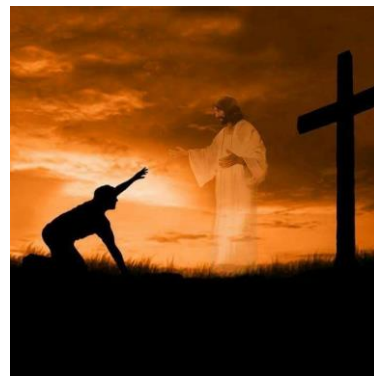
So perhaps it is time to revisit our attitudes to 'devotions' and realise from where some of them arise. As we end the month of October (a month of the Rosary) we can reflect on the lives of Saints and Holy Souls and their path to eternity. What helped them?

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There are as many devotional practices as there are people. Devotion is the heart's expression of love – love for a God who loved us first and rejoices at our devotedness.
Halina Holman

Pope Francis

"If your devotions bring you to Christ, that works. But if you remain there, something's wrong. If Jesus is not at the centre, there will be many other things, so that people become "Christians without Christ." Remembering that Jesus is the centre of faith "regenerates us, grounds us." The mark of a true is 'Christian with Christ'. "The rule is simple: only that which brings you to Jesus is valid, and only that is valid that comes from Jesus. Jesus is the centre, the Lord, as He Himself says." Vatican City, Sep 7, 2013



*Lord, teach me to pray
as you would have me
pray,
Let me have the courage
to pray with both
humility and courage,
Let me praise You
always, and remember
that You are my God in
whom I Trust. HH*

Feast Days in October

- 1st St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus
- 2nd **Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ord. Time**
- 4th St. Francis of Assisi
- 5th St. Faustyna Kowalska
- 6th St. Bruno
- 7th **Our Lady of the Rosary**
- 9th **Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ord. Time**
- 12th St. Wilfrid
- 13th St. Edward the Confessor
- 15th St. Teresa of Avila
- 16th **Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ord. Time**
- 18th **St. Luke, Evangelist**
- 19th St. Paul of the Cross
- 22nd St. Pope John Paul II
- 23rd **Thirtieth Sunday in Ord. Time**
- 26th Ss. Chad and Cedd
- 28th **Ss. Simon and Jude, Apostles**
- 30th **Thirty-First Sunday in Ord. Time**



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