

Readers Group Guide
Prayer Notes to a Friend
by Fr. Edward Hays

From front: How can we pray backward in time?
How is not praying prayer?
What is Good grief?
Bartender Prayer
Sacrifice of the Tongue

Wants to be accepted as your Anam Cara (that's the Irish term for Soul Friend.) He wants to be with us I Emmaus meals...from Luke's gospel There were two disciples on the road to Emmaus after crucifixion. Christ appears to them and breaks break for them. They then recognize him.

"I reject the title of Spiritual Director, feeling myself to be a perpetual student of the Spirit life." He also disclaims the role of Spiritual Master, saying he's still a student. Page 11

PERPETUAL SOUL ADORATION. Human breathe 23,000 times a day. Prayer is to the soul what breathing is to the body

Prayer is communion and contact with the Source of Life. Since by its nature the soul is in communion with God, it is constantly praying. Should try to become more and more aware of one's soul as the nucleus of one's spiritual activity. Don't be absent-souled, which is being forgetful of the soul.

God loves originals. God created a unique soul in you. Everything you touch will be marked with your soul print. Page 12 and 13

SOUL EXPLORATION...Age of Exploration hasn't ended. There's a primal urge to explore. First half of life involves developing bodies, educating minds and cultivating talents. Middle of life for exploration of the soul. We are souls with bodies and not bodies with souls. Soul has a radius larger than your body. Pages 14 and 15.

SOUL MEMORY MAPS.

Souls have memories of the time the souls were given to their owners. Usually our pre-Birth memories remain dormant until just before death,. Soul's memory is subterranean, it constantly speaks to you. We have an unquenchable hunger for something new and different and this is our soul map. Explorer souls that are awake are inordinately greedy to find God in everything. Next time you want to buy something new, see if you're not really craving something old, so ancient as to be eternal. Page 16 or 17

VOW OF PLENTY

Classic practice of self-denial, classic spirituality is one of subtraction. Surest way to God is by emptying oneself out. Usually expressed in poverty, chastity and obedience.

Vow of plenty as a way to God. It dedicates you to zealously pursuing an extravagantly bountiful life. This is God's Way, because God is profusely lavish to an excess. Strive to a love of life God, self, friend, family and neighbor in an unsurpassingly generous way. Those who take this vow never get enough of God. They want more and more of the Mystery. They never get enough of love, life beauty, prayer and intimacy. They are gluttons at the feast of genesis,. Page 18 and 19

THE SENSES OF THE SOUL

In her canticle Mary said he soul magnified ...enlarged.. the lord...

For Jesus and all Israelites, human were "ensouled"...their body and soul wedded with life....and so Jesus experienced his soul as having great appetites and emotions.

The voice of the soul is expressed in silent thoughts. When thought of a friend enters your mind, such thoughts are soul prayers By think of them, you pray for them. Soul has ears for messages of inspiration,; cultivated souls can hear the cries of the suffering The soul can see the Divine hidden beneath of veneer of fin, flesh or feather. Sense of touch when handle the daily things of life with reverence usually reserved for the vessels of an altar. Page 20 -21

SOUL GENDER

The idea that we have a body in a soul is a Greek idea. There is a total permutation of the human soul with the human body, complete with sexual identity. So should the soul be it or a personal pronoun?

We don't talk about the Almighty It. In the 21st century may a sensor will detect the gender and sexual orientation of a reader and automatically change all the pronouns into the appropriate ones for the reader. Page 22 and 23

BODY-SOUL SELF-CLEANSING

Walt Whitman identifies the beauty of the body with the beauty of the soul. All parts of the body are good. When bad thoughts about the body come up, pray for God-sight, in which you see the body as soul-saturated and awesomely beautiful. Society and religion enforce negative ideas about the body.

While undressing, pray a wordless prayer that you will never desert your body, nor any parts of it, for some artificial state of holiness. Page 24 and 25

EDEN'S SOUL WATER

Genesis...Adam waterlogged as God threw water on him.

Water constitutes more than 60% of your body, 90% of your blood, and 80 to 90% of your muscles. Would die in 10 days or less without water.

When take a bath, or watch it rain, ponder water as a vital image of your soul. Use water as a souls symbol so that it will become a prayer of remembrance of your inner self. Pages 26 and 27.

FROM THE SEA

Soul comes from the old German word saiwalo that means from the sea because the German thought that souls came from the sea.

In Jewish, Christian and Moslem traditions breath is seen as the source of the soul.

Contemplate water. Could water itself not become a sacramental? Page 28 and 29

FOUNTAIN FOLLOWER

No matter how handsome, the body is lifeless without the soul bubbling up. Be a river of spirit water bringing freshness, life and delight to all with whom you come in contact. Have unguarded openness, fill other's canteens with your soul's elixir of life. Page 30 and 31

He says Make Extravagant Generosity your Greatest Vice and Become God-like.

JUGULAR PRAYER

Koran says that God is closer than the vein in your neck. Put fingers on neck and feel how God is pulsating within you. Use it when in an argument or in any difficult encounter. Page 32 and 33

HIDDEN HOLINESS

Don't be overt in your spirituality. Can use the Jugular Prayer. No one will notice. Page 34 and 35.

SONORA SOUL PRAYER

The parched Sonora desert is where real prayer can begin. The parched soul can acknowledge the need to be replenished with God as the soul of life. You get dehydrated when you become chronically busy. Being physically hungry and thirsty is good

preparation for all authentic expressions of the soul including praying. Picture a spring rain. 36 and 37.

YOUR IMPERISHABLE SPIRIT

Mysticism is nothing more than directly experiencing the Divine Presence. Should use the "your imperishable spirit is in all things." Mystics attempt to treat all things with adoration. Pages 38 and 39

SO HELP ME, GOD

We ignore the fact that we need God's assistance to do anything. The oath "So help me, God" can be an ideal prayer reminder. You might say that prayer before you begin mundane tasks. Page 40 and 41

PRAYER OF THE EYE

Mystic is one who beholds reality from the perspective of the soul. Prayer of the Eye: First look with wonder. Second, look with expectation, with adoration anticipation of the appearance of the Invisible One who saturates all that encircles you. Act Three can be viewed from several vantage points: God doesn't appear, God appears, or the viewer is God-filled.

Contemplating the invisible involves looking twice; it is sight without seeing. The Invisible One is fondly gazing back at you. Page 42 and 43

INCUBATOR PRAYER

Must be an incubator for the dream of a new social order based on peace and justice, love and compassion. Prayer of incubators is "May your kingdom come, in me, here on earth, as it is has already come in Heaven." You pray hope-saturated warmth into your environment with every positive statement you make about people and the world. Page 46 and 47

VIRUS PRAYER

The Contagion of Christ is a holy infection. And hope heats the incubator that lets the virus grow.

Chinese have a saying, "Keep a green branch in your heart, and for sure a songbird will come."

About *Prayer Notes to a Friend*

Edward Hays says that he started periodically sending notes to friends about prayer. As the list of friends who might receive his notes grew, Hays became worried about the time and money involved in addressing mail and sending it out. After a fleeting consideration about e-mail, Hays decided to write *Prayer Notes to a Friend*.

In *Prayer Notes to a Friend*, Hays' creativity is boundless. By use of visual images, he demystifies mysticism, and tantalizes with even the titles of the 59 prayer notes, including such inspirations as Jugular Prayer, Blessed Bolsheviks, and Cactus Prayer.

Who is Edward Hays?

Edward Hays wants to be your Anam Cara (that's the Irish term for soul friend.)

Some people would rather describe Hays as a Spiritual Director or Spiritual Master, although he rejects those titles. He says that he's still a student of the spiritual life.

Hays is the founder of the Shantivanam, a retreat house sponsored by the diocese of Kansas City in Kansas. Hays was a priest who was finding that his priestly duties kept him from prayer. He asked his for a sabbatical in a monastery, and instead, was given a year to go around the world, from Rome to Tibet, to learn about prayer. He was then asked by Archbishop Ignatius Strecker to start a house of prayer for both laypeople and religious. A few years ago Fr. Hays retired as leader of Shantivanam.

Because of his experience running Shantivanam, which means Forest of Peace in Sanskrit, and because of the 25 other books he has written, Fr. Hays has become widely known and loved as an expert on prayer and spirituality. His books are, not coincidentally published by Forest of Peace Publishing. About *Prayer Notes to a Friend*

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Before You Read *Prayer Notes to a Friend*

Here are the titles of some of Fr. Hays' prayer notes. Take your best guess about what the following prayer notes are about.

1. Jugular Prayer
2. Bartender Prayer
3. Oven Prayer

4. Clock-Winding Prayer
5. Vow of Plenty

Then think about your own prayer life. And think about the following questions:

- What type of prayer life have you have created for yourself?
- Did you grow up in a prayerful home? Explain how your home prayer life affected you.
- Do you pray only when prayer is part of a church ritual?
- How often do you pray on your own?
- Do you have a goal in your life of ceaseless prayer?

Discussion After You Have Read *Prayer Notes to a Friend*

- Hays says God loves originals, that created a unique soul in you. Everything you touch will be marked with your soul print. Describe your individual soul print, what your soul is about.
- We are souls with bodies rather than bodies with souls, according to Hays. In another visual image, Hays says that the radius of the soul is larger than the radius of the body.

Hays suggests that we explore our souls, and quotes Shakespeare:

There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which taken at the flood leaves on to fortune
Omitted and they spend
The rest of their lives in the shallows.

How do Shakespeare's words encourage soul exploration?

- The Book of Wisdom says of God that "your imperishable spirit is in all things." Hays says that we have mystic souls designed to experience God in all things, that "your imperishable spirit is in all things" should become a mantra for us.

Hays also suggests that we borrow the courtroom plea, "So help me, God," and use that as a four-word prayer when we begin a task.

Have you ever used a mantra like prayer, such as the type Hays suggests? If so, has repeating a prayer over and over proved helpful to you?

- Hays writing is full of unexpected juxtapositions of ideas. For instance, he says that we should pollute each project with hope and joy. He wants us to become incubators and spread the idea of the Kingdom of God like one spreads a flu virus.

Which of Hays' images is the most startling to you? Which unusual take on prayer and the spiritual life spoke to you in a special way?

- Bartenders hear more confessions than priests, according to Hays, and neighbors are approached with problems more than psychologists. Hays says that we can sometimes be more helpful to friends with problems than can the professionals. Hays says that we might encourage friends to uncork their pent-up issues by talking about them, and that listening kindly and nonjudgmentally is The Bartender Prayer.

What do you think is the best way to get a person to talk about their problems, and what is a bad technique.