

Ora et Labora: Paths toward Prayerful Teaching¹

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Abstract

Although prayer is a central spiritual discipline for Christians, few contemporary scholarly discussions have ventured into exploring the role of prayer in college teaching. This paper extends the conversation by: Rediscovering three themes in writings about prayer and academic learning; adopting an overarching integration of work and prayer; and, proposing a model of four paths toward prayerful teaching. Appendices offer practical suggestions by which an educator might further explore prayerful teaching.

Introduction

Boundaries

Given the fact that Christian teachers cannot do anything to advance the kingdom of God in their teaching environment apart from the abiding presence, guidance, and help of the Holy Spirit, it behooves us to *repeatedly* seek the face of Christ in prayer (Chewning, 2001, p. 115).

What does it mean to teach prayerfully? Although prayer is a central spiritual discipline in Christianity, few scholarly discussions have ventured into the role of prayer in college teaching. This paper attempts to re-energize the conversation in three ways. First, we identify three long-term footpaths of Christian prayer in the college curriculum and classroom by examining mostly historical writings on prayerful teaching. Next, we turn to contemporary reflections on a sixth century Rule in which Benedict of Nursia gives instruction about the balance of prayer and work. And finally, we propose a prayerful teaching model which encompasses four avenues to prayer—through words, work, service to others, and silence.

Our focus will be on prayerful teaching, largely avoiding discussions of prayer in the co-curriculum and teaching that is primarily evangelistic or catechetical.² Although the biblical

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treatment of prayer and one's resultant theology of prayer has immense implications for this discussion, my approach is to glean from Christian writings over the centuries on prayer and education, and let the reader make theologically-informed selections from these eclectic gleanings. Appendix A points the reader to several theological and practical tools on prayer.

What is Prayerful Teaching?

One obvious place for our beginning a quest for understanding prayer in higher education would be to consider the debate over prayer in American public schools. But although prayer seems front-and-center, this discussion largely misses the mark for defining prayerful teaching. As Dean (1989, p. 48) writes:

much of what is being recommended as a prayer appropriate for use in schools is little more than the perfunctory recitation of an exceedingly noncommittal form of words or a quiet moment in which one reflects on a topic of one's choice—on God, if that is what one prefers. Whether the public school in America is an appropriate setting for authentic prayer is obviously a divisive legal issue, but the argument has less to do with the nature of prayer than with the history of our country and the nature of the public education system as it has recently developed.

Quaker educator Parker Palmer (1983) has written, "We cannot settle for pious prayer as a preface to conventional education." "Instead," he asserts, "we must allow the power of love to transform the very knowledge we teach, the very methods we use to teach and learn it" (p. 10). Pazmiño (1992) writes similarly: "Christian educators...assume the need for a conscious dependence upon God and an interdependence with God so that education can change people's lives." What Palmer and Pazmiño are describing is in essence Christian education. And while there are many paths to Christian education, it is perhaps most simply Christian when it is prayerful since prayer suggests constant communion with God and dependence upon him. This is why Calian (1997, p. 178) says "The cultivating of prayer ought to be at the core of the church-related college's education and vision."

Prayers are not always said prayerfully, and prayer in class does not assure prayerful teaching. Rather, prayerful teaching assumes a humble and appreciative approach to learning—humble because it recognizes human limitations, and appreciative because God is acknowledged as the source of the created world and the origin of all the resources we have to grapple with it. Thus, fundamentally, *prayerful teaching is an approach to education whereby the learner, teacher,*

²Prayer in the co-curriculum has at times been closely related to learning. The educational philosophy of many nineteenth-century American universities counterbalanced curricular and co-curricular activities: Theoretically, the classroom trained the mind and the co-curriculum boosted the student's social and spiritual development. Until about 1900, many universities—including state-supported schools—required students to attend chapel, evening or morning prayers, and/or Sunday sermons. Historical records suggest, however, that many doubted whether required religious services produced an immediately visible, prayerful transformation of students and faculty.

content, and teaching methods are informed by an on-going dialogue with God. Hodgson (1999, p. 48) writes that Christian theology—and I would add prayerful teaching—

does not simply graft Christ and the Holy Spirit onto an essentially unchanged Greek *paideia*.... The problem is principally one of ignorance rather than illusion or false consciousness. Christianity, with its Hebraic as well as Hellenic roots, radicalizes the perception of what is wrong: there is a fall, a sinful turning away from the one true God to false gods, to idols, above all to the idol of the isolated, self-absorbed self. The remedy for this problem is not recollection but salvation, conversion, transformation. Education is not so much the drawing-forth of what the human subject already knows inwardly, but the drawing-out of the human subject from self-centeredness to God-centeredness or reality-centeredness. Christ and the Spirit play central roles in this process.

Prayerful teaching intentionally acknowledges God in all aspects of learning.

Points of Critique

One might counter that the act of teaching is not any more prayerful in the life of a Christian than is cooking, conversing, or playing lacrosse—all of life is seamlessly prayerful when one approaches it with openness to the presence of God. Thus, “prayerful teaching,” some might argue, is a redundant phrase for the disciple of Christ. For our purposes, teaching is termed prayerful when it is distinguished from teaching that is *not* prayerful, wherever that may be found, rather than being elevated above other activities in the life of a prayerful Christian. For one daily invested in prayer, an exploration of prayerful teaching may open new and deeper avenues for prayer in life. Who after all has “already been made perfect” in the lordship of Christ (Phil. 3:12)?

Another possible objection is that the teaching of some technical subjects—such as accounting or mathematics—is challenging to distinguish as distinctively Christian.³ Similarly, for various reasons some students or settings may be inhospitable to prayer. Attempts to shoehorn prayer into a subject or class where it doesn’t fit may actually degrade prayer’s significance, one might argue, transforming it into an irrelevant ritual or a vehicle for selfish wishes. But prayerful teaching is about much more than a worded prayer in class. In its essence, it is the antithesis of meaningless rites and selfish wishes. Even if the subject matter is largely left intact, there are other dimensions of the classroom which can be transformed by prayerful teaching. It is like Jesus’ parable of the kingdom of heaven being like “yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough” (Mt. 13:33). By placing a major emphasis on simply being one of God’s “oaks of justice,” like the quietly working yeast, one can expect to enrich those open to such a witness, even without alluding to prayer or faith. The bread just quietly rises. This allows the teacher to satisfy the desires of those who want their professors less overtly “religious” and more in tune with their subject discipline. One might do most of one’s spiritual work in a classroom by this soft approach of letting God seep through one’s

³I am circumventing the discussion of whether the integration of Christian theology in various disciplines is efficacious, and am assuming that most readers agree that it is, while recognizing that some may not.

convictions, attitudes, and demeanor, with little overt and direct reference to one's religious journey, but from time to time, where mention of God, prayer, and the things of God is appropriate, the prayer-minded teacher might experiment with some more overt approaches for nurturing the fruits of the Spirit into the classroom. Prayerful teaching is worked out within the unique blend of each professor, subject, and class.

A third point of critique quickly to follow might be that prayerful teaching seems to fall into a shallow "attitudinal" approach to faith-learning integration—a form of integration wherein the teacher's attitude and the college's ethos exude "a positive attitude toward liberal learning because in God's creation every area of life and learning is related to the wisdom and power of God" (Holmes, 1975, p. 47). Integrationists often suggest that attitudinal, pietistic integration doesn't penetrate to the philosophical roots of a discipline. But I would argue that a pietistic approach to faith integration is an excellent beginning place because it embraces a professor's entire person and work, subjecting all one is and does to the Lordship of Christ.

As envisioned by John Wesley, the Christian life entails orthodoxy, orthokardia, and orthopraxis—the word of scripture combined with a pure heart and just behavior (Clapper, 1997). Piety provides the personal commitment to deeply and comprehensively examine multiple levels of integration, including philosophical scaffolds, pedagogical methods, and the involvement of the student, teacher, and Spirit. Prayer and scripture are primary tools to open the dialogue with God on all of these matters.

Writing on Christian Prayer in Higher Education

Although conversation about prayer in academic teaching is largely silent today, it was not so among patristic and medieval educators. Medieval epistemologies and pedagogies differ from many of those in vogue today, and it is intellectually precarious to merge views on knowledge, divine revelation, and spiritual formation from across the centuries without acknowledging the diverse contexts of each era in which the views were forged. Considering the expanse of historical thought, however, provides a baseline against which we can compare the present, and it stimulates new thoughts.

Before proceeding, a word should be said about why so many Catholic writers will be encountered on the topic of prayer in teaching and why Protestants are relatively silent on the subject. Of course Christian writers in the West prior to the renaissance were generally associated with the Roman Catholic Church. Among them, monastics were often involved in educational instruction and reform and were pioneers in daily prayer as well. Thus, monastics and Catholic religious tended to retain a practice of prayer in learning.

Many Protestant universities established from the reformation (c.1500 - c.1700) forward reflected the belief of reform writers that God implanted insight and abilities into each human mind. Although subject to the fallen nature of the world, these mental gifts could be exercised regardless of whether the giver of those gifts is acknowledged. The Christian student and scholar needed neither special revelation nor unique methods to uncover truth; each could benefit merely by applying him or herself to study (Cowan, Ebertz & Shields, 2000). Thus, in many Protestant institutions of higher learning, prayer found a more comfortable home in the co-curriculum—in

campus chapel and church services and in private prayer. Anti-mystical modernism further marginalized prayer as did fundamentalism’s emphasis on objective truth.⁴ Thus, while a few exceptions exist—such as the Quaker concept of “divine light”—it is largely Catholic, monastic writers who kept the concept and practice of prayer in education.

Function	Description	Representative Authors
Intellectual Enlightenment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God is the source of true enlightenment, unlocking understanding and guiding toward higher wisdom • Learning comes through divinely-aided reflection on personal thought and experience 	Augustine of Hippo Bonaventure of Bagnoregio Ignatius of Loyola Karl Rahner
Spiritual Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayer humbles prideful scholars and emphasizes compassionate knowledge • Prayer provides an indirect boost for the will to study, prioritize, and perform academically • Prayer buoys the tired and challenged scholar 	Parker Palmer John Coe
Religious Instruction & Moral Example	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piety, religious deference, and moral example complement academic learning with religious truths 	Authors of the <i>Ratio Studiorum</i> John Baptist de La Salle

Table 1: A Sampling of Thought on Prayer in Academic Teaching

A sampling of sources across two millennia and a variety of educational and religious traditions suggests that prayer in teaching has played three, interlocking functions: That of intellectual enlightenment, spiritual discipline, and, religious instruction and moral example. Table 1 summarizes these three functions of prayer in education, along with a sampling of representative authors.

⁴A healthy debate exists as well on the place of reason in Catholic and Reform scholasticism. Some have argued that among Thomistic and Reform theologians, rationalism diminished both the potency of prayer and the authority of scripture. Rehnman (2002) contests the point (at least for Reform theologians), arguing that reason was viewed as “the natural light, the inferior epistemological causality by which human beings learn of God and divine things...enlightened by the Holy Spirit through the Word” (p. 262).

Prayer as Intellectual Enlightenment

That divine wisdom is given by God is a clear message in biblical, patristic, and medieval writers. Although Paul was writing about the Christian gospel, his opening of 1 Corinthians illustrates the contrast of human knowledge against divine wisdom: “Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ...For the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength” (1 Cor. 1:20, 25). Perhaps speaking as much about the heart as the mind, Matthew records Jesus’ words: “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children” (Mt. 11:25). James describes wisdom as given by God through prayer and by “deeds done in humility” (Jas. 1:5; 3:13-18). Paul too describes the origins of wisdom as from the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:12): “We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.” These New Testament writers build on a solid teaching in Hebrew historical, prophetic, and wisdom literature that all insight, wisdom, and understanding come from God: “The LORD gives wisdom and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding” (Prov. 2:6).⁵

Augustine of Hippo’s (354-430) writing titled *On Christian Doctrine* (written in 397) was a revered authority for early medieval pedagogy. Written as a guide for teachers of scripture, Augustine instructs that (book 3, chapter 37):

students of these venerable documents ought to be counselled [sic] not only to make themselves acquainted with the forms of expression ordinarily used in Scripture, to observe them carefully, and to remember them accurately, but also, what is especially and before all things necessary, to pray that they may understand them.

Augustine held a high view of God’s involvement in understanding and wisdom—it is God who gives true understanding and insight; human intellect and pedagogy are by themselves insufficient to illumine brightly: “the aids of teaching, applied through the instrumentality of man, are of advantage to the soul only when God works to make them of advantage” (*Doctrine*, book 4, chapter 16). Augustine did not abandon the contribution of reason and study to

⁵The deuterocanonical book of Wisdom advances a similar thought (8:8): “...if one yearns for copious learning, she [Wisdom] knows the things of old, and infers those yet to come. She understands the turns of phrases and the solution of riddles; signs and wonders she knows in advance and the outcome of times and ages.” And earlier (Wis. 7:15-22a): “Now God grant I speak suitably and value these endowments at their worth: For he is the guide of Wisdom and the director of the wise. For both we and our words are in his hand, as well as all prudence and knowledge of crafts. For he gave me sound knowledge of existing things, that I might know the organization of the universe and the force of its elements, the beginning and the end and the midpoint of times, the changes in the sun’s course and the variations of the seasons. Cycles of years, positions of the stars, natures of animals, tempers of beasts, powers of the winds and thoughts of men, uses of plants and virtues of roots—Such things as are hidden I learned and such as are plain; for Wisdom, the artificer of all, taught me.”

knowledge when paired with faith, but he viewed prayer as an invitation to God to illuminate what is dim and blurred in human sight (Pedersen, 1997).

The Augustinian view of epistemology permeated medieval teaching, allowing Thomas à Kempis (1379-1471) to continue this chain-prayer through the ages for divine guidance—not just to discern correctly, but to feel and act in response to knowing (quoted in Davies, 1990, p. 119):

Grant, O Lord,
to all teachers and students,
to know what is worth knowing, to love what is worth loving,
to praise what pleases you most,
and to dislike whatsoever is evil in your sight.
Grant us with true judgement to distinguish things that differ,
and above all to search out and do what is well-pleasing to you,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Eight centuries after Augustine, educator **Bonaventure** of Bagnoregio (1221-1274) expanded Augustine's neo-Platonic catalog of sources of knowledge. He writes in his text, *The Mind's Road to God* (1988, chap. 1, para. 2 and 6):

By praying thus one is enlightened about the knowledge of the stages in the ascension to God. For since, relative to our life on earth, the world is itself a ladder for ascending to God, we find here certain traces [of His hand], certain images, some corporeal, some spiritual, some temporal, some aeviternal; consequently some outside us, some inside....

Therefore, according to the six stages of ascension into God, there are six stages of the soul's powers by which we mount from the depths to the heights, from the external to the internal, from the temporal to the eternal—to wit, sense, imagination, reason, intellect, intelligence, and the apex of the mind, the illumination of conscience (“Synteresis”). These stages are implanted in us by nature, deformed by sin, reformed by grace, to be purged by justice, exercised by knowledge, perfected by wisdom.

For Bonaventure, prayer is instrumental in ushering in the highest form of knowledge—the “illuminations of conscience.” As an illustration, Bonaventure credits prayer as the door through which he came to know these hierarchical stages to knowledge.

In 1541, **Ignatius** of Loyola (1491-1556) further refined the sense in which divine wisdom—vis-à-vis reflection—combined with experience and action produces true knowledge. For Ignatius, divine enlightenment is not an instant revelation, or the highest stage in a hierarchy of sense-making tools. Rather it occurs as the world of ideas is melded with honest introspection and reflection. Kolvenbach (1993, p. 12) explains:

A fundamental dynamic of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius is the continual call to reflect upon the entirety of one's experience in prayer in order to discern where the Spirit of God is leading. Ignatius urges reflection on human experience as an essential means of validating its authenticity, because without prudent reflection delusion readily becomes possible and without careful reflection the significance of one's experience may be neglected or

trivialised. Only after adequate reflection on experience and interior appropriation of the meaning and implications of what one studies can one proceed freely and confidently toward choosing appropriate courses of action that foster the integral growth of oneself as a human being.

Four centuries later, in his book of prayers, Karl **Rahner** (1904-1984), the influential Catholic professor of dogmatic theology at the University of Innsbruck, echoed Ignatius' integration of life and learning in a heart-felt prayer (1960, pp. 28-29, 30, 32):

It is said—and who am I to dispute it, Lord?—that knowing belongs to the highest part of man, to the most properly human of all his actions. And You Yourself are called “*Deus scientiarum Dominus*,” the Lord God of all knowledge. But doesn't such high praise contradict the experience of Your holy writer? “I applied my mind to a new study; what meant wisdom and learning, what meant ignorance and folly? And I found that this too was labor lost; much wisdom, much woe; who adds to learning, adds to the load we bear” (Ecclus. 1:17-18).

It is also said that knowing is the most interior way of grasping and possessing anything. But actually it seems to me that knowing touches only the surface of things, that it fails to penetrate to the heart, to the depths of my being where I am most truly “I.”

Knowledge seems more like a kind of pain-killing drug that I have to take repeatedly against the boredom and desolation of my heart.... Truly, my God, mere knowing is nothing. All it can give us is the sad realization of its own inadequacy. All it can tell us is that through it we can never fully grasp reality and make it a living part of ourselves.

Only knowledge gained through experience, the fruit of living and suffering, fills the heart with the wisdom of love, instead of crushing it with the disappointment of boredom and final oblivion. It is not the results of our own speculation.... And all the knowledge we have acquired through study can do no more than give us some little help in meeting the problems of life with an alert and ready mind.

May You alone enlighten me, You alone speak to me. May all that I know apart from You be nothing more than a chance traveling companion on the journey toward You. May it help to mature me, so that I may ever better understand You....

Rahner learned to doubt the salvific nature of intellectual endeavor. In this vein, he sounds like the litany of protests as to the vanity of just about everything one finds in Ecclesiastes, including knowledge and the making of books (Ecc. 12:12). Yet, rather than disparaging of intellect, there is an extensive tradition until the seventeenth century of “double-knowledge”—a seeking to know oneself (broadly defined to include all existence) and God (Houston, 2000). Whether through Augustine and Bonaventure's marriage of neo-Platonic reason and Christian faith or Ignatius and Rahner's divinely enriched reflection on life and suffering, the point is the same—God enlightens, and for education to be complete and wise, it must incorporate a prayerful invitation of God's wisdom. This divine illumination suggests the value of prayer and contemplation of scripture and life as a prominent component of learning for the Christian teaching and student.

Prayer as Spiritual Discipline

Although “knowledge contains its own morality” (Palmer, 1983, p. 7) prayer as the conduit for divine illumination seems to deal mostly with matters of the mind. Another function of prayer deals more with the heart. It is this application that is reflected in sociologist **Parker Palmer**’s (b. c1940) last lines of his book, *To Know As We are Known: A Spirituality of Education* (1983, p. 125):

Once we have been to the depths of prayer, we can begin to know as we are known. Our prideful knowledge, with which we divide and conquer and destroy the world, is humbled. Now it becomes a knowledge that draws us into faithful relationship with all of life. In prayer we find the ultimate space in which to practice obedience to truth, the space created by that Spirit who keeps truth with us all.

Quaker writers before Palmer expressed varying degrees of confidence in human intellect. But the Quaker tradition acknowledges that God is the ultimate teacher, the “Inward Teacher” as another Quaker educator, Paul Lacey (1988), writes. The outcome of this teaching is not necessarily a gnostic form of higher knowledge, but a changed heart, and thus altered educational values, priorities, and methods. In concert with the redemptive emphasis in Reform perspectives, Palmer (1983, pp. 8, 9) writes:

The goal of a knowledge arising from love is the reunification and reconstruction of broken selves and worlds. A knowledge born of compassion aims not at exploiting and manipulating creation but at reconciling the world to itself. ...a knowledge that springs from love will implicate us in the web of life; it will wrap the knower and the known in compassion, in a bond of awesome responsibility as well as transforming joy; it will call us to involvement, mutuality, accountability.

How else is this humility of heart to occur in the academy but by prayer in the teaching and learner.

Evangelical educator **John Coe** (2000) offers a different emphasis, but one which considers prayerful teaching as spiritual discipline. Coe acknowledges the role of divine enlightenment but suggests that prayer aids in cultivating and maintaining personal study habits which lead to the application of knowledge for redemptive purposes. In instructing students, Coe writes (p. 96):

Since course work or class time itself is a kind of discipline, we will employ the...classical spiritual disciplines (prayer, fasting, meditation in the word, awe/silence before God, etc.) to aid us all in being able to stay rightly focused on the course content or training of each class. These “service disciplines” will assist us in appropriately opening ourselves to our course work in Christ.

Thousands of students (and teachers) have prayed for motivation to study and enhanced performance on assignments, either as scholastic afterthought or as a remedy for faulty preparation. But Coe's recommendation is a buttress to a solid architecture of learning.⁶

A final manifestation of prayer as spiritual discipline is as a salve for the challenges of collegiate life. John Jerram, a Magdalene College, Cambridge student in the 1790s, recounted in his journal the sentiment of probably scores of students over the centuries (quoted in Searby, 1988, p. 275):

Many and happy were the seasons we spent together in reading the scriptures and in prayer.... I can truly say...that these engagements were not only the happiest, but the most profitable of our college occupations. They greatly tended to relax the weariness of the same routine of reading; they counteracted the chilling effect of abstract studies, and the unchristian tendency of Pagan literature and profane mythology.

Private prayer and a spirit of prayerful reverence have no doubt built up the faith of many engaged in academic pursuits, as they have others (Jude 20). Thus, prayer can serve as a channel for humbling prideful scholars, fashioning compassionate and righteous purposes for study, boosting the will of one to learn, and buoying the tired and challenged. No classroom from the ancient period hence is without need of these remedies.

Prayer as Religious Instruction and Moral Example

A third and obvious function for prayer in the classroom is for religious instruction and moral example. As did many other teachers and pupils, Bernard of Chartres' (d. 1130) twelfth-century students ended each day in prayer. What's important to note is Bernard's rationale—to “edify faith and morals.” The professor's assignment is recorded by John of Salisbury in *Metalogicon* (Thorndyke, 1944):

But since neither school nor any day should be without religion, such material was set before them as would edify faith and morals.... So the last part of this *declinatio* [evening homework]...preferred the paths of piety and commended the souls of the dead to their Redeemer by devout repetition of the sixth Psalm ...and the Lord's Prayer.

At the twilight of the medieval period but still reflective of its practice, a group of seasoned and gifted Jesuit teachers and school administrators authored the *Ratio Atque Institutio Studiorum Societatis Jesu* (*The Plan and Methodology of Jesuit Education*) ([1599]1970). The **Ratio Studiorum** was written as a teaching manual for the 245 Jesuit schools and four Jesuit universities which existed at the time of its publishing. The first topic in the “Common Rules of Professors of Higher Faculties” is prayer (p. 25):

It should be the set purpose of the teacher, both in his lectures as opportunity offers and on other occasions, to inspire his students to the love and service of God and to the practice of

⁶Perhaps students would benefit from a faculty who, like Moses, constantly “hold up their hands” in prayer while students battle to learn and grow (Ex. 17:8-16).

the virtues which He expects of them, for this is the sole purpose of all their activities.... To keep this ideal ever before their minds let one of the students recite a short prayer, composed for this purpose, at the beginning of class. The professor and students should follow attentively and with heads uncovered. At least let the professor, with uncovered head, make the sign of the Cross and then begin his lecture.... He should also pray frequently for the spiritual welfare of his students and be an example to them by his dedicated life. And he should sometimes exhort them on religious matters, at least prior to the major feasts and the longer vacations. He should especially urge them to pray to God, to examine their consciences in the evening, to receive the sacraments of penance and the holy eucharist frequently and fervently, to attend Mass daily, to listen to sermons on all feast days, to shun bad habits, to hate sin, and to cultivate the virtues worthy of a Christian man.

Likewise, in the “Rules of the Scholastics of the Society,” the authors directly instruct students to be prayerful about their studies, in part, reflecting the Augustinian affirmation of divine wisdom, but with an outcome of being Christ-like in behavior more than divine wisdom (p. 95):

The scholastics of our Society should make it their chief endeavor to preserve purity of conscience and a right intention in their studies. They should not seek anything in their studies except the glory of God and the good of souls. In their prayers they should frequently beg for grace to make progress in learning so as at length to fulfill the Society’s hope that by their example and learning they will become able workers in the vineyard of Christ our Lord.

Catholic colleges and universities were still referring to the *Ratio Studiorum* as curricular bedrock in the late nineteenth century (Rudolph, 1977). More recently, Jesuit educators gathered to consider the *Ratio Studiorum*’s continued relevance to twenty-first century education (Duminuco, 2000). This foundation is not simply that of a religious rite, but also committing any act to God before commencing in it. It is the training aspect we wish to emphasize here.⁷

By the seventeenth century, although Jesuits had developed a reputation for higher education and the Ursuline and Visitation orders had for finishing schools, primary education for the working-class and poor remained sorely neglected (Everett, 1996). Among the many French reformers of primary education was **John Baptist de La Salle** who along with the Christian Brothers order he founded, dedicated themselves to primary education, mostly for the poor.⁸

La Salle and his brothers wrote extensively about both education and prayer (La Salle, [1720]1996; [1730-31]1994; [1734/1760]2002; [1739]1995). Drawing on Descartes, La Salle’s systems of prayer and education were analytical, logical, and detailed. His system included the

⁷This spirit of committing all things to God and living and acting within his will reaches back to Benedict—“First of all, every time you begin a good work, you must pray to him most earnestly to bring it to perfection” (RB, Prol. 4) and to biblical teaching (Psa. 37:4-6; Prov. 16:3).

⁸Although La Salle’s attention was focused on primary education, he and his brothers are included in this survey because of their extensive thought and writings about the melding of prayer and teaching.

recitation of many memorized, liturgical prayers throughout the school day, a main purpose of which was to (1996, p. 92)

help the teacher to recollect themselves and recall the presence of God; it will serve to accustom the students to think of God from time to time and to offer God all their actions, and to draw on themselves God's blessings. At the beginning of each lesson, a few short Acts [prayers] will be said to ask of God the grace of studying well and learning well.

Earlier in the same work (p. 54), La Salle mentions that students do not recite daily prayers

in order to learn, but only to show that they do know these, and, as for the prayers and responses of holy Mass, to learn how to say them properly.

La Salle was not promoting the mechanical recitation of prayers, but reflecting—both by the frequency and structure of prayer—the centrality of the catechism in his educational system and the importance of prayer in all aspects of the Christian life. Although he is at a state-supported institution, University of Virginia economics professor Kenneth Elzinga reflects a contemporary expression of prayerful teaching as religious instruction and moral example (2000, p. 4):

why do I pray for my students? ...Because Jesus taught His students how to pray—and His disciples often saw Him at prayer and were invited to be with Him when He prayed. I want my students to know that I pray. I want my students to see me broken before them as a man of prayer so that they know it is OK for them to petition God. I also believe in the efficacy of prayer.... And I pray because it reminds me that the world in which I live, and the time I have been given, even my office hours, are claimed by my Lord and this is one way that He has staked out this territory as His.

The subtlety of distinctions among these three functions in prayerful teaching may indicate they are more related than separate. But if it doesn't distort the case too much, one might say that intellectual enlightenment extends content, spiritual discipline transforms method and purpose, and religious instruction and moral example parallels and compliments knowledge with spiritual truths.

Are Classrooms Devoid of Prayer?

Even as the three themes emerge—prayer as intellectual enlightenment, spiritual discipline, and religious instruction—prayer remains obstinately difficult to pin down in the learning process. If patristic and medieval educators thought prayer was important in the curriculum, why does its presence and pedagogical purpose remain largely submerged from understanding and practice? I believe there are at least four reasons.

First, while curricular debates and philosophies of teaching are common, theologies of teaching and classroom ethnographies are rare. Thus, even when prayer is mentioned in relation to study and the classroom, its specific mechanics are beyond knowing. How is it that prayer influences learning? In what ways should prayer and study be integrated? An example is Thomas Aquinas' advice to a monastic brother on "How You Should Study" (Donnelly, 2002, p. 20). Thomas

entreats brother John to “not give up spending time in prayer” but Aquinas does not expound upon how prayer influences teaching, learning, or the learner, nor could he. There are comparatively few descriptions of teaching delicate enough to pick up the underlying structure of a professor’s view and practice of teaching-related prayer and even with prayer, “how unsearchable [are God’s] judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out” (Rom. 11:33b).

A second reason for the lack of knowledge about prayer’s role in academic endeavors is because modes of knowing—such as rationalism, empiricism, and ecclesiastically-determined orthodoxy—operate by different epistemological rules than does prayer. Prayer doesn’t seem to naturally fit with these approaches to knowledge in which most educators were trained to think and teach. As Coe (2000, p. 94) writes of his graduate school training: “I knew the importance of prayer, but it was neither the medium nor the message of my education,” so for years, he didn’t pass it along to his students. This is likely the experience of many.⁹

Third, liturgical and private prayer partially hides the nature and presence of prayer in an academic setting. Christians who do not pray privately may experience prayer only in the liturgy and see prayer as largely disconnected from academic pursuits. Professors and students who do engage in private prayer often restrict any public observation (or even their own awareness) of the nature of prayer in teaching and learning.

Finally, religious and secular pluralism makes prayer potentially offensive to students, even in some church-related colleges. As Palmer (1983, p. 10) says: “Vocal prayer in class dictates a consensus that does not exist in our pluralistic society, and any prayer that is so vaguely worded that it sounds agreeable to all is, by my limits, no prayer at all.” Prayers is not just silent, but often absent in learning and teaching.

A survey of writings on prayer in teaching is helpful for detecting prayer’s presence, but additional reflection is needed to be intentional about its purpose in contemporary practice. Thus, we turn our attention to the question of prayerful teaching in practice.

Undergirding Principles of Prayerful Teaching: Prayer, Work, and Scripture

Much writing suggests that prayerful teaching cannot be found by elevating prayer to the top of a list of teaching priorities. Thus, I will not argue for demoting “secular” activities, such as professional reading on content or pedagogy or mentoring students, for the sake of celebrating prayer. Rather, we turn to two principles taught by Benedict of Nursia (c. 480-547) which provide a foundation for prayerful teaching which themselves project wisdom. The first principle is for prayer to be apportioned but to protect other activities too, such as work and study—and to integrate them all.¹⁰ The second principle is not to pray haphazardly, but

⁹Of course several excellent histories recount the working out of religious belief and the intellectual history in American higher education, including Catholic (Gleason, 1996), and evangelical and mainline Protestant accounts (Burtchaell, 1997; Marsden, 1994; Sloan, 1994).

¹⁰Benedict’s balance and divine hours can be applied in the life of an individual teacher, but it also applies to the structure, practice, and ethos of community life—indeed that was its intended purpose. Although not developed here because it is often more narrowly focused on pedagogy

intentionally and often. In exploring both of these principles, I'll rely heavily on the reflections of scholars studying the Rule of Benedict.

Integrated Prayer, Work, and Study

In an effort to sum up the gospel in practical terms for a community of cenobitic Christians, Benedict of Nursia (480-547) wrote a Rule which became the basis for Benedictine, Cistercian, and several other monastic orders. Although Benedict wrote that “nothing should be preferred to the work of God,” by which he meant prayer, the *opus Dei*, Benedict suggested that physical, spiritual, and intellectual activities should each be allotted a place in the Christian life.¹¹ It is *ora et labora*—a Benedictine motto developed in the nineteenth century meaning prayer *and* work, not prayer to the neglect of work, or work to the neglect of prayer.

But rather than segmenting life into sealed compartments, Benedict's balance emphasizes blending work, study, and prayer as they support one another. As Taylor (1989, p. 38) has reflected on Benedict's counsel: “Without prayer, study can become intellectually prideful. Without study, prayer can be uninformed. Without work, both can become removed from reality.”¹² One commentator on Benedict's Rule illuminates the ways in which work is complimented by prayer. de Waal (2001, pp. 103-04) writes:

Prayer and life cannot be separated one from the other; both are rooted and grounded in love. The love which we find in the Rule is never an abstraction. It is lived-out love, lived out in the context of our daily life and work, above all our daily contact with other people.... There is nothing sentimental in his attitude to what may be involved here. He is in fact describing life as most of us experience it: a ceaseless round of daily duties, cooking and then serving and then washing up; constant attention to the needs and claims of others, and all this probably in addition to the job for which we have been professionally trained.

St. Benedict is asking us to pray through all of this. Prayer undergirds and supports this life of activity. “Whenever you begin to do anything say a prayer” (Prol. 4). Meals begin and end with prayer. Routine duties are prefaced with prayer; the porter greets the guest or

rather than encompassing a professor's life, Ignatius' tri-part model of experience, reflection, and action has provided a complementary approach to Benedict's (Kolvenback, 1993).

¹¹Other monastic Rules and practices placed a heavier emphasis on one of the three partitions of a monk's day. For the Dominicans, study was emphasized (Thimmes, 1992); for the community at Cluny—a monastic reform movement launched in 910—public liturgy was preeminent (Kardong, 2001). Benedict didn't coin the idea of moderation but it deeply seasons Benedictine monastic life.

¹²“Prayer” was a reference to private prayer and communal prayer at set times throughout the day. “Work” referred to the various manual labor jobs which had to be completed for the monastery to be self-sustaining. The “study” to which Benedict's refers was commonly reading, contemplating, memorizing, and meditating (*lectio divina*) upon biblical and patristic texts. While scriptural study will not be explored here, it is difficult to imagine teaching being prayerful without the leavening of scripture in the life of a teacher (Ps. 119:99).

the visitor at the gate with a blessing. Material things are handled with as much love and reverence as if they were sacred vessels of the altar. All these short moments of prayer are moments of re-focusing. They are moments to recall God's presence. St. Benedict's way to God does not live in any particular mystical experience, but in all the ordinariness of daily living. Prayer is a dimension of a life lived progressively for God.

Daily, regular relationship with God through prayer assists the teacher in moving in this direction. But it will be achieved in reserving a space for work and prayer and allowing each to meaningfully find expression in the other.

Praying Frequently

Jesus encouraged his disciples to pray continually (Lk. 18:1). The apostle Paul entreated Christians to pray often (Eph. 6:18; 1 Thes. 5:17) and persevere in prayer (Col. 4:2; Rom. 12:12). Paul prayed constantly as well (2 Thes. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:3). The Psalmist (113:3) entreated: "From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the LORD is to be praised." On this basis, Benedict admonished monastic disciples to engage in private and communal prayers often.

Monastic prayer traditionally followed the Psalmist's exclamations: "Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous laws" (Ps. 119:164) and as justification for nightly Vigils, "At midnight I rise to give you thanks for your righteous laws" (Psa. 119:62). Eight times of prayer have become traditional: Matins (midnight), Lauds (3:00 am or sunrise), Prime (6:00 am), Terce ("3rd hour" in Latin, 6:00 am), Sext (6th hour, or 9:00 am), None (9th hour or noon), Vespers (6:00 pm or sunset), and Compline (Latin for "complete;" 9:00 pm or dark).¹³ In the early church, prayer at various hours of the day carried specific meaning (Vermeiren, 1999, p. 95): "In his *De Ieiunio*, [Tertullian] writes that it was at the third hour that the Holy Spirit was sent down upon the Apostles, at the sixth hour that Peter was at prayer on the housetop at Joppa and received the vision about Cornelius, and at the ninth hour that Peter and John cured the lame man at the entrance to the temple. In the same treatise, Tertullian gives a more Christological interpretation to the hours of prayer, one which is taken over by Cassian in this *Institutes*: the sixth hour, when the monks sing Sext, is the time when Christ was nailed to the cross, and at the hour of None they reflect on the death of the Lord."

¹³Kardong (1996, p. 192) adds this note: "In Psalm 118:164, seven means 'many,' as it does throughout the Bible. The tendency of Christians was to take this literally as in the seven sacraments, seven capital sins and so on. RB 38.2; 42.3; 43.2 all testify to [Benedict's] reverence for the number seven. Probably the monks first developed the practice of praying seven times a day and only later sought scriptural justification for their custom.... As Cassian claims in *Inst.* 2.1, the real point of praying seven times daily was not so much to match the biblical number, but to 'pray always.'"

Vermeiren (1999) (p. 93) says about the Divine Hours:

Following the Lord's example, Benedict asks his monks to pray unceasingly, and make one single great prayer out of the whole of their lives: all their thoughts and actions are concerned with their relationship with God. Nevertheless, this unceasing prayer is focused on certain important moments of the day.

Prayer warrants a protected place in one's life and schedule if teaching is to become prayerful. Vest (1997, pp. 95, 97) underscores this importance of seeing a time for prayer:

Benedict insists that all work is to be continuously intermingled with prayer, in order that work is seen in true perspective. No matter what we are doing when the bell rings for prayer, we set it aside and go to worship and praise. This is a very simple requirement, part and parcel of the daily life of monastics today and throughout the centuries—yet outside the monastery it seems an outrageous intrusion.

Benedict urges that we regularly lay aside whatever we are doing, and turn our attention to God. Deadlines do not matter; they can wait until the work of prayer is completed. It does not matter whether I am in the middle of the most important conference of the decade, I interrupt it for worship. Everything in my work takes its place around the central fact of God's being, adoration of God's mysterious glory, and delight in God's love. Without this centrality of relationship with God, nothing else has meaning. With it, everything else is illuminated with God's generous grace....

What might be the effect of such rhythm of "interruptions"? How might such a pattern affect our work: At first it may seem pointless and artificial. But if we persist in the regular practice of prayer breaks in the midst of our work, they are likely to create a powerful shift in our habitual attitudes about our tasks. At first we notice that these spiritual "breathers" have a physical effect: they release stress and give us a slight energy boost. Eventually, interruptions of this sort gradually create in us quite a different sense of the context in which we work, a new perspective on what is really important, and a fresh idea of what we are seeking to accomplish. They might change dramatically how we view our work, giving us among other things a sense both that our work matters to God and also that it is far less urgent than we thought. Because God is always alongside our efforts, we can relax more....

The hours provide us with a framework that molds and feeds and moderates our private prayer, and which our private prayer in turn makes more interior and personal and intense.... Those who pray at the same time every day are the ones who pray every day. Otherwise things of the spirit often get lost in the shuffle of our other more mundane but seemingly more pressing daily obligations.

Casey (1996b, pp. 52-53) makes a similar recommendation, that regular structure can be spiritually liberating and enriching. Like many other writers about prayer, Casey emphasizes creating a rhythm that is sustainable, not ponderous:

I can sympathize with those who say it is not possible to do much about prayer because daily events are too unpredictable. But I wonder if they are being completely honest with themselves. What may be lacking is not the opportunity to pray but the desire and will to pray—and that poses different problems. A routine of prayer has to be flexible if it is not to

crack under the strain of reality. Structure does not have to be experienced as imposition. It can be liberating. It can enable us to insert into our life something we want included, without having to go through the drama of decision-making on each occasion.... By my calculation, the Lord's Prayer can be said quietly and reverently in about 30 seconds. It is hard to believe someone is so busy that a minute and a half cannot be found for prayer. Nor is this gift so meager as to be unacceptable to God. There are times in the lives of most of us when we can scarcely manage more than that. Even the smallness of our offering is eloquent. Like the widow's mite, it may be all we have (Mark 12:41-44). The gesture expresses our desire to give, and at the same time underlines our paucity of means. Moreover, prayer is prayer, no matter how limited in scope. It is a wedge that will, in time, open our heart wider to the divine reality. Its narrow edge allows it to penetrate more easily. Better to start with a little and upgrade ever so slowly, than to begin boldly and find it impossible to maintain one's pace. The life of prayer is more a marathon than a sprint.

Can regular daily prayer become a legalistic, meaningless rite? Sure. Can prayer be just another task on an already full daily schedule? Easily. Can regular prayer devolve to sentimental piety? Yes. But if the to do list is too full for prayer it is unlikely that prayerful teaching has enough air to survive. Prayer in the midst of work recalls our thoughts to God rather than to ourselves, and to priorities rather than to urgencies. Prayer centers us on God and his presence, rather than on ourselves.

Infrequent prayer often merely punctuates the day, much like a tent stake penetrating the soil but not altering its composition. But frequent prayer is more like a fertilizer stake, radiating transformation by inviting an abiding awareness of God's presence into the core of the day.

In sum, to practice prayerful teaching requires a balance of integrated activities—not an exclusive focus on either prayer or teaching—and a frequent rhythm of prayer and teaching so balance is not forgotten, nor integration lost.

A Model of Prayerful Teaching

In the final third of this paper, we turn our attention to specific ways in which prayer can be infused in the life and work of a teacher. Figure 1 illustrates a model of prayerful teaching developed thus far—the principles of prayerful teaching in the center—balanced integration of prayer with work and study, and frequent prayer, and the three functions which are born from it in the outer ring—intellectual enlightenment, spiritual discipline, and religious instruction and moral example. In the middle circle are four modes of prayerful teaching—prayer in words, work, others, and silence—each of which will be explored below.¹⁴

¹⁴These four approaches mirror three of Foster's (1998) six types of spirituality: Prayer in word is evangelical; prayer in silence is contemplative; and, prayer in work and service to others is incarnational. Foster's three other spiritualities are: Charismatic, holiness, and social justice. While not explored here, these three types of spirituality are likely manifest in the *outcome* of prayerful teaching. Because of a teacher's relationship with God, the content one chooses to teach might be influenced by a Christian call to social justice. Likewise, the methods a teacher

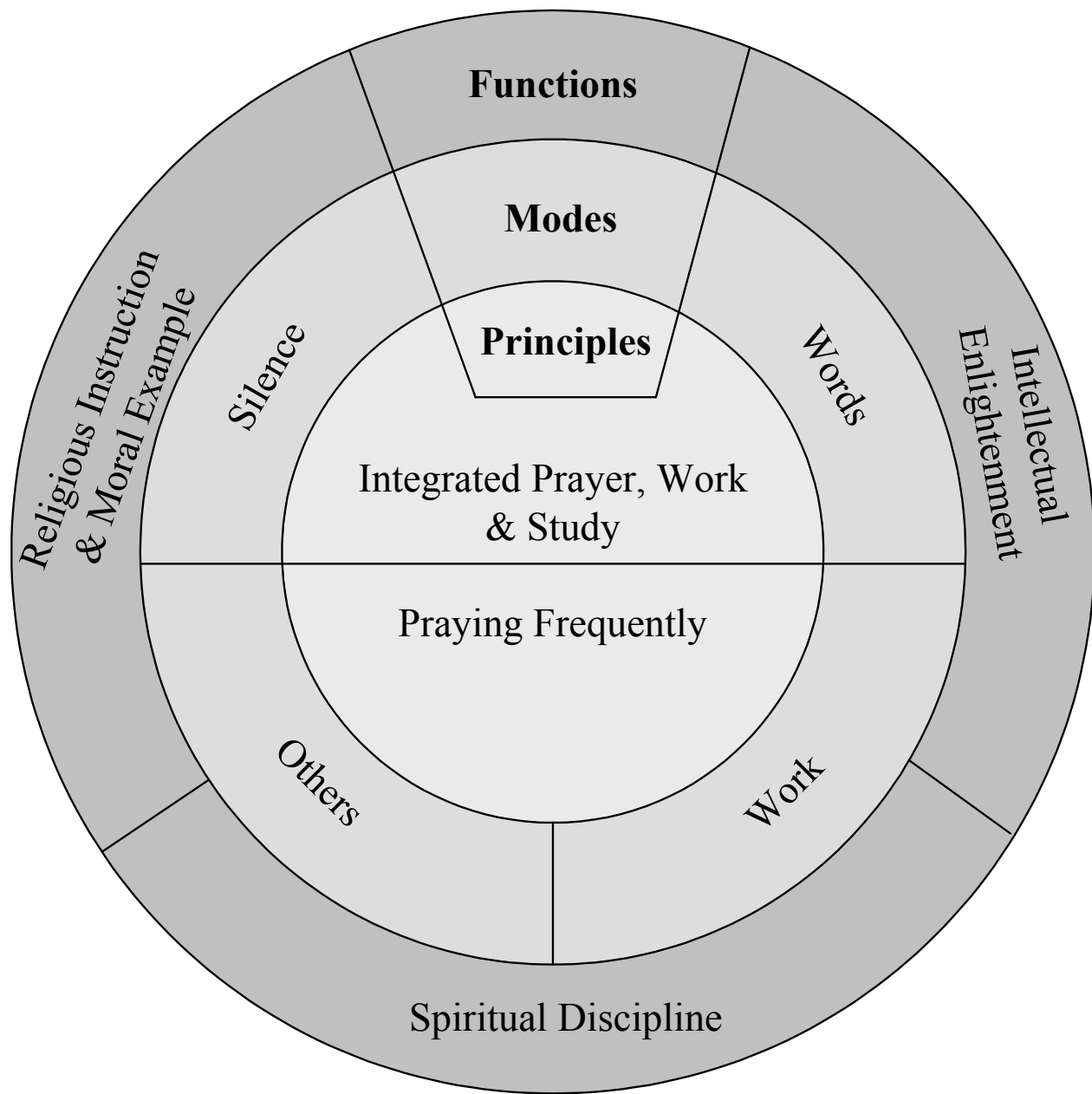


Figure 1: A Model of Prayerful Teaching

uses might be modified through holiness and charismatic perspectives, which both emphasize life changes that occur out of a desire to live in concert with God's Spirit.

Prayer in Words

The traditional approach to prayer is prayer through words. Generally called “concentrative” prayer, one uses words—spoken or thought—to bring praise, confession, and supplication to God. This is perhaps the most common approach to integrating prayer in teaching. Worded prayers may be public in class or private in one’s office, briefly and silently worded between classes or at designated extended times, offered with colleagues or students or alone.

Recorded prayers in biblical scripture and biblical instruction on prayer suggest that there are many things that one can bring to God in prayer—praise, requests, intercession for others, confession, lament. In an attempt to balance these, many writers on prayer have recommended a particular combination and order of prayer topics within a prayer or across a day or week. One might create or adopt a prayer calendar which briefly lists different issues or individuals to pray for each day. One might adopt or compile a prayer book in which prayers are recorded to be prayed on various days. Some pray scripture too.

Relatedly, *lectio divina* is an ancient practice of meditating on scripture or other writings (cf. Casey, 1996a; Magrassi, 1998; Pennington, 1998). It is a contemplative way of interacting with a text, rather than simply reading a passage through. Scripture perhaps has been most commonly used but poems or hymns can form the texts of prayers too. Many daily devotional books with meditative thoughts are available as well.

Writing down prayers and spiritual reflections has long been helpful in reminding God’s people of his acts and love. Keeping a spiritual journal may help one be more aware and observant of the spiritual dimensions of life and it shows perspective and events over a spiritual journey.

In terms of integrating worded prayer into the classroom, there are traditional approaches—such as praying orally in class—which can be approached creatively such as with a prayer calendar already mentioned. Written prayers can be distributed to students, reminding them to be prayerful in their studies. A prayer such as Verhalen’s (1998, p. 11) could be used, or an original prayer might be composed by the teacher:

Lord, give me the grace to do my best in all my studies.
Through all the things I learn,
may I come to know and to love you better.
Rather than my own profit,
may your honor and glory and the service others
be the motive that inspires me.
Give me a love of the truth,
perseverance in difficulties,
modesty in success and cheerfulness in failure.

On the campus of Biola University, Coe (2002) creatively integrates worded prayer in course assignments. Here are two examples from his course entitled “Perspectives on Human Nature” (pp. 106-7):

Ask God and your soul the degree to which your Christian life, your pursuit of the ministry, being a professional, and your trek through seminary and graduate school relates to what Horney calls the False Idealized Self and its search for glory (20 minutes).

Practice *Lectio Divina* in the presence of God and your soul regarding the theme of “Belonging to God” (Rom. 14:7-8: “For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s”) (20 minutes).

These are only a sampling of ways in which worded prayer could be integrated into the professor’s and students’ life and work. The other three approaches to prayer—prayer through work, service to others, and silence—may be less familiar than worded prayer, but they can be cultivated.

Prayer through Work

In Rahner’s (1960) prayer which he titled “God of My Daily Routine,” the theology professor expressed his desire for the hectic and mundane busyness of life to become prayer (pp. 46, 48, 51, 52):

my soul has become a huge warehouse where day after day the trucks unload their crates without any plan or discrimination, to be piled helter-skelter in every available corner and cranny, until it is crammed full from top to bottom with the trite, the commonplace, the insignificant, the routine....I now see clearly that, if there is any path at all on which I can approach you, it must lead through the middle of my ordinary daily life....I must learn to have both “everyday” and Your day the same exercise. In devoting myself to the works of the world, I must learn to give myself to You, to possess You, the One and Only Thing in everything. ...in You, all that has been scattered is re-united....in Your Love all the diffusion of the day’s chores comes home again to the evening of Your unity, which is eternal life.

Although he uses words to do so, Rahner eloquently expresses his desire to lay his everyday activities before God. If nature (Ps. 148) can praise God without words, why can’t people? But how is this accomplished?

There are several ways in which work—and specifically teaching—might become prayer. Three, each of which has its advocates and exemplars, are: A constant awareness of God’s presence in one’s work; a recognition that life must be consistent with prayer to give glory to God, thus, one listens to God’s call while teaching; and, work as an offering itself to God. In each of these, the overlay of work and prayer is quite different. In practicing the presence of God, work potentially can be a distraction from prayer, but one may be strengthened to do difficult and at times distasteful tasks better because of an awareness of God’s presence. In hearing God’s call moment-by-moment, faith alters and shapes one’s responses and actions, and thus one’s work. In offering work as prayer, work becomes sanctified and the quality of one’s work rises in importance. We’ll briefly explore each of these.

Nicholas Herman of Lorraine (1611-1691), or Brother Lawrence (1989) as he is more commonly known, was a seventeenth century lay brother who—not by choice—worked in the kitchen in a French Carmelite monastery. Although he was not formally a teacher, he offers an archetype of prayerful work which is relevant in higher education. Over a period of ten years, Brother Lawrence experienced two changes in his prayer life: He focused increasingly on God’s love and less often on his faults and challenges at work; and he practiced a constant awareness of God’s presence and conversed with Him, not just the times of liturgical prayer. In Brother Lawrence’s letters, he writes:

I made this my business, as much all the day long as at the appointed times of prayer; for at all times, every hour, every minute, even in the height of my business, I drove away from my mind everything that was capable of interrupting my thought of GOD (1st letter).

I have quitted all forms of devotion and set prayers but those to which my state obliges me. And I make it my business only to persevere in His holy presence, wherein I keep myself by a simple attention, and a general fond regard to God, which I may call an actual presence of God; or, to speak better, an habitual, silent, and secret conversation of the soul with God (2nd letter).

...let him think of Him the oftenest he can, especially in the greatest dangers. A little lifting up the heart suffices; a little remembrance of God, one act of inward worship, though upon a march, and sword in hand, are prayers which, however short, are nevertheless very acceptable to God; and far from lessening a soldier’s courage in occasions of danger, they best serve to fortify it (3rd letter).

Steindl-Rast (1984, p. 48) provides a more recent testament and expansion of this concept:

if we call it mindfulness or wholehearted living, it is easier to recognize prayer as an attitude that should characterize all our activities. The more we come alive and awake, the more everything we do becomes prayer. Eventually, even our prayers will become prayer. Some people find it easier to eat and drink prayerfully—mindfully—than to say their prayers prayerfully.... Does it seem easier to recite a Psalm with recollection than to eat or drink or walk or hug with that same wonderment and concentration? It may well be the other way around. For some of us, saying prayers wholeheartedly may be the crowning achievement after we have learned to make every other activity prayer.

One contribution that Brother Lawrence and Steindl-Rast illustrate is that with God’s help and a certain amount of discipline (or surrender), one can learn to work without fading from an awareness of God’s presence. Brother Lawrence admits that this constant awareness took years to cultivate and it allowed him to do distasteful tasks without emotional upheaval. Although fused, his focus is more on prayer filling time and actions at work than on work itself.

A slightly different approach to prayer through work is a recognition that life must be consistent with prayer to give glory to God, thus, one listens to God’s call while teaching. Taylor (1989, p. 33-4) describes this approach to prayerful work from Benedict’s perspective:

Prayer was not an activity isolated from other activities. Rather, the life of a monk was to be his prayer. Benedict was far less concerned about performance during periods of prayer than about the quality of daily life.... This should come as good news to those who have often felt that, in order to “really seek God,” one must spend hours daily in terribly advanced forms of prayer. It is enough to hear the Word of God and keep it in everything we do throughout the day. Therefore, when one is dissatisfied in one’s prayer life, the Benedictine method would be to look at one’s life and deal with what is dissatisfactory there rather than to look for some new, better way to pray. Our prayer is a mirror of our life.

In this balance of daily activity, one is called to constantly “listen,” which is Benedict’s first word in his Rule. The call that Benedict writes about is not a one-time call, but a daily, moment-by-moment call: “To listen closely, with every fibre of our being, at every moment of the day, is one of the most difficult things in the world, and yet it is essential if we mean to find the God whom we are seeking” (de Waal, 2001, p. 43).

Vest (1997, p. 40) underscores the point: “A call from God is not primarily a call to *do* something. Instead, it is to be a faithful partner and friend, and from that identity vocation naturally emerges.” This sense of call is different from a one-time call to the teaching profession or the call to profess Christ Jesus. It is a call that can be heard as clearly in moments of work as in prayer and study. Daily, regular relationship with God through prayer assists the teacher in moving in this direction.

Perhaps the most direct and simple equation of prayer through work is the most difficult to grasp, and that is work itself as an offering in itself to God. Colossians 3:23 is often invoked: “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.” Ephesians 6:5-9 likewise says:

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

An older witness to this idea is plain to see in Ecclesiastes (9:10): “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working, nor playing, nor knowledge, nor wisdom.”

Taylor focuses the importance of motivation and purpose in the classroom (1989, pp. 39-40): “One is not to engage in study in order to become a good student—one is to do so in order to grow in God’s grace.... With this purpose, the distinction between study and prayer becomes blurred.” Thus, the quality of one’s work and one’s diligence in work may become an offering to God, a prayer. This approach can be manipulated to mean work to the exclusion of other life activities. But the Benedictine principle of integrated balance should be recalled—“excellence” in life and

work does not mean excelling in work to the exclusion of study and prayer. Rather, excellence is work balanced and infused by prayer.

Prayer through Service to Others

Seeing God in others does not replace other approaches to prayer, but it can create a palpable type of prayerful teaching. It makes one aware that students and colleagues are Jesus incarnate: “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (Mt. 25:40). This is often a type of prayer practiced by those working with the poor, such as Mother Teresa of Calcutta or Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker movement.

This approach is evident in Mother Teresa’s daily prayer, “Jesus, My Patient” (Muggeridge, 1971, pp. 74-75). A modified prayer could be prayed about one’s students:

Dearest Lord, may I see you today and every day in the person of your sick, and, whilst nursing them, minister unto you.
thought you hide yourself behind the unattractive disguise of the irritable, the exacting, the unreasonable, may I still recognize you, and say:
“Jesus, my patient, how sweet it is to serve you.”
Lord, give me this seeing faith, then my work will never be monotonous. I will ever find joy in the humouring the fancies and gratifying the wishes of all poor sufferers.
O beloved sick, how doubly dear you are to me, when you personify Christ; and what a privilege is mine to be allowed to tend you.
Sweetest Lord, make me appreciative of the dignity of my high vocation, and its many responsibilities. Never permit me to disgrace it by giving way to coldness, unkindness, or impatience.
And O God, while you are Jesus, my patient, deign also to be to me a patient Jesus, bearing with my faults, looking only to my intention, which is to love and serve you in the person of each of your sick.
Lord, increase my faith, bless my efforts and work, now and for evermore. Amen.

Again, although expressed in words, Mother Teresa is expressing a desire to *see* rather than to verbalize and to act as a result of seeing. Mother Teresa’s prayer is reminiscent of Jesus’ Matthew 25 parable of people who cared for Christ incognito (verses 37-40):

Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go visit you?’
Then the King will reply, ‘I tell you th truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did to me.’

Although generally interpreted literally, it is easy to imagine these conditions as symbolically—if not literally—characterizing students—destitute, in need of life, lonely, and imprisoned. How does one come to see students as Jesus? For most, only after intentionally and frequently praying for eyes to see is this vision sustained. This avenue of prayer reminds us that prayer is not a solitary

activity, but it is reflected in right actions too, actions that take us beyond ourselves. Prayerful teaching does not end in quiet meditation.

Prayer through Silence

The first word in the prologue to the Rule of Benedict is “Listen!” Listening means deeply considering events, acts, nature, students, and the world around us, and obeying Christ’s lead in all these. Many Western Christians view prayer as an exercise of the intellect praying without words and concepts seems foreign. A Benedictine abbot, Casey (1996b, p. 38) reflects on prayer as being otherwise:

Prayer is not a matter of actively thinking about God. It does have a mental component—one of its tasks is to re-form and re-educate our thoughts—but it is not primarily a work of the mind. Efforts to conjure up words, concepts or images are not good beginnings. Its source is an act of love and desire that wells up from the heart. The contents of the mind during prayer spring from the will.

Many monastic writers attest to this expression of pure prayer, such as Bianchi (1998, pp. 62-3), writing about *lectio divina*:

The Word which has filled us with joy, the Word which was with God and is God now also dwells in our deepest selves and is our way, our light and our life. No longer do we need to cry out, we can simply allow this Word to drift, like incense, quietly and peacefully to heaven. This is the phase of the groaning of the Spirit, which we can neither understand nor express and of which we are sometimes barely even aware. What we should do is simply rest in the Word, and the Spirit will lift us up inwardly towards God.... Now we taste our faith, as Elijah tasted the bread prepared for his journey through the desert (1 K 19:5-8), as Hagar slaked her thirst in the desert (Gn 21:19), as John felt the physical presence of Jesus when he rested against his chest at the Last Supper (Jn 13:25).

There is more to silent prayer than the absence of words. Keating (1992, 1994) mentions eight varieties of contemplative prayer, including “centering prayer” which focuses on receiving rather than concentrating, on submitting to God’s presence instead of concentrating on a biblical text or idea (Keating, 1994, pp. 68-9):

The primary function of the sacred word is not to push thoughts away or to thin them out. It is rather to express our intention to love God, to be in God’s presence, and to submit to the Spirit’s action during the time of prayer.... All methods that lead to contemplation are more or less aimed at bypassing the thinking process. The reason is that our thinking process tends to reinforce our addictive process—our frenzy to “get something” from the outer world to fuel our compulsions or to mask our pain. If we can just rest on a regular basis for twenty to thirty minutes without thinking, we begin to see that we are not our thoughts.

Romans 8:26b-27 says: “We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.” Prayer in silence is enjoined by Habakkuk’s (2:20) decree that “the LORD is in his holy temple;

let all the earth be silent before him,” but just as much by the Psalmist’s exclamation (84:10), “Better is one day in your courts, than a thousand elsewhere.”

Prayer without words may be unfamiliar and it may take some practice before it feels natural. But it is a rich path for communing with God in ways which can bless the teacher to slow down and be healed by God’s presence and love and in turn allow that love to radiate beyond oneself.

Conclusions

What conclusions may be drawn from this study of prayerful teaching?

- Historically and today, prayer may be integrated in teaching as a conduit for intellectual enlightenment, an expression of spiritual discipline, and a forum for religious instruction and moral example.
- Two Benedictine principles provide a foundation for a healthy prayer life: A balance of mutually-supporting activities—prayer, work, and scripture—and prayer offered frequently and regularly.
- Prayer can be infused in teaching through a rich variety of approaches: Through words, work, service to others, and silence.
- Prayerful teaching can vary along a variety of dimensions. Each teacher must seek his or her own rhythm in the task of making their prayer life and classroom witness obtain richness and breadth.

But can a regular, balanced and integrated approach to prayerful teaching transform “the very knowledge we teach, the very methods we use to teach and learn it,” suggested by Palmer (1983, p. 10)? “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Mt. 19:26b).

I call upon You:
I wish to devote my mouth and my heart to you;
I shall teach the people.
I myself will learn and ponder diligently upon Your Word.
Use me as Your instrument—but do not forsake me,
for if ever I should be on my own,
I would easily wreck it all

~ Martin Luther’s Sacristy Prayer (1909, band 43, p. 513)

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Appendix A: Theological and Practical Tools for Prayer

Below are several practical notions for integrating prayer and teaching. These are offered with three caveats:

- These are merely a sampling—there are hundreds of resources on prayer
- Practical discussions may be helpful but it is essential that God rather than technique be the center of attention.
- A simple, maintainable approach is preferred to prayer as a heavy, unsustainable load. Prayer is relationship but it often takes discipline to maintain relationships.

Approaching Prayer

Teaching is a demanding profession with endless material to read, new methods to perfect, and individual students to get to know. Thus, for teaching to become prayerful, one must find ways to take a momentary hiatus from the scattered nature of teaching and approach prayer in stillness.

A Place

Although prayers can be offered anywhere, some have found that having a designated place to pray helps maintain a regular prayer life. Your place to pray may be a local church, a spot in nature, an empty office, at the kitchen table, or in the car. Scripture records people praying in numerous locations including in a home (2 Kings 4:33; Acts 12:12-13), in the wilderness (Mk. 1:35), in a bedroom (Dan. 6:10), in a garden (Mt. 26:39-42), on a cross (Lk. 23:42), on a boat (Jon. 1:14), before a crowd (1 Kings 8:22), in exile (Neh. 1:4), before a King (Neh. 2:4), on a mountainside (Mat. 14:23), in prison (Acts 16:25), and elsewhere.

A Time

To maintain a meaningful and growing relationship with God, prayer needs to be scheduled. Prayer calendars or a simple prayer list offers something to pray about differently throughout the day or week and takes prayers beyond oneself. Besides simply working prayer into scheduling software, some scheduling aides specifically for prayer are available, such as:

- www.prayertoday.org (“Prayer Runner”)

Consider occasionally taking a prayer retreat or *poustinia*, consisting of a few hours to more than a day to retreat to a place of silence. For guidance on prayer retreats, see:

- www.prayertoday.org
- Catherine de Hueck Doherty (1975). *Poustinia: Christian Spirituality of the East for Western Man*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press.
- Paulsell provides a brief summary of Doherty’s advice: William O. Paulsell (1993). *Rules for Prayer*. New York: Paulist Press.

An Attitude—For prayer and teaching to become prayerful, one generally begins in stillness. Any avenue of prayer is enhanced by an approach which is still and unhurried. LaFountain (n.d.) recommends that before praying, one becomes still using a 3-minute, hourglass. During the time the grains of sand are falling, let go of anxieties and pressures, surrender to God, and wait quietly in stillness. Centering prayer also begins with stillness (see Keating, 1992, 1994 in “Prayer in Silence” below):

- www.prayertoday.org (“Prayer Places” by Richard W. LaFountain, n.d.)

More than a daily schedule or time management aid, a Rule specifies activities but also principles for how those activities will be pursued. Rules can be helpful in maintaining a regular prayer life. For a review of several Rules with modern applications, see:

- William O. Paulsell (1993). *Rules for Prayer*. New York: Paulist Press

Prayer Cues—One can be reminded to pray frequently by identifying cues which prompt brief prayers. Bells rung in a monastery are obvious cues for prayer as are rosary beads, but various cues commonly found or intentionally placed inside or outside the classroom can prompt one to pray: The feel of the wind becomes a reminder to praise God for his Spirit at work among students; green grass is a reminder of trees planted by streams of living water; a photograph of Martin Luther King, Jr. or Mother Teresa above one’s door prompts prayer from a class for courage and justice. Many people write out a short prayer on decorative paper and place it on a bookshelf or desk. The hunger pangs of fasting remind one that sustenance is granted by God. A crucifix, a flag of a nation, a post-it-note prayer list by a computer—the key is to select a few items which reliably remind one to offer a prayer of thanks or adoration or supplication. Music playing in one’s office can be a cue to pray. The main point is that one be reminded often to recall God’s presence, justice, purposes, and help.

Resources—There are many excellent works which can broaden and deepen one’s appreciation for prayer:

Books—Among the hundreds of possibilities...

- Foster, Richard J. (2002). *Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home* (10th ed.). San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Paulsell, William O. (1993). *Rules for Prayer*. New York: Paulist Press
- Hybels, Bill & Neff, LaVonne (1998). *Too Busy Not to Pray: Slowing down to Be with God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press

Publishers—Dozens of publishers, including the following, offer multiple titles on prayer:

- Ave Maria Press
- Eerdmans
- Orbis Books
- Cistercian Publications
- Liturgical Press
- Upper Room Books

Periodicals—a few which focus on prayer and spiritual formation include:

- *Desert Call* (Spiritual Life Institute)

- *Pray Magazine* (NavPress)
- *Spirituality* (Dominican Publications)
- *Weavings* (Upper Room Books)

Why We Don't Pray and What to Do About It?

Pray about what distracts you from prayer.

Begin by feeling God's complete love for you—Feel the love and unconditional acceptance of the woman who searches for the lost coin (Luke 15:8-10) and the shepherd who searches for his lost sheep (Luke 15:1-7). Consider it as a loving friendship developing.

Recognize that prayer depends more on God's mercy than our words or merit. As Butler (1983, p. 86) says: "The period of set prayer should be approached in a spirit of humble reliance, not on one's own capacity to pray, but on the mercy of God who calls us to prayer, gives us the will to pray, and responds to that will by further outpourings of his grace."

Our role is surrender to God:

How then, and by what kind of prayer, can we fulfil [sic] the intentions of our Lord and Master? By the prayer of the heart, which consists of an habitual and constant disposition of love to God, of trust to Him, of resignation to His will in all the events of our lives; in a constant attention to the voice of God, speaking to us in the depths of our consciences and unceasingly suggesting to us thoughts and desires of good and perfection. (Grou, 1889/1955 quoted in Butler, 1983).

Butler, Basil Christopher (1983). *Prayer: An Adventure in Living*. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier.

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ...I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him...and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead....I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. (Phil. 3:7-12).

Begin with a simple, somewhat flexible plan or effort—brief, spontaneous prayers like "Help!" and "Thanks" are prayer. Remember Jesus' instruction to avoiding heaping up words in prayer with the aim of being long-winded (Matt 6:7-8). While a set structure encourages discipline, Benedict advised against legalistically binding obedience to the Rule. Rather, in several places, he encourages that the Rule be softened and modified: "It is this paradoxical attitude of zealous moderation that defines the uniqueness of Benedictine life. Such an attitude draws us forward into our calling in Christ, yet recognizes our human frailty" (Taylor, 1989, p. 32).

Go easy on yourself about distractions. Realize as Butler (1983, p. 81) says, "To want to pray is the heart of prayer." Butler continues (1983, pp. 82-3, 85):

...distractions...do not matter. They do not interrupt your real prayer. Your real prayer is your intention to pray, your intention to give this half-hour over to attending to God.... What God is interested in is not so much what goes on or does not go on in your imagination or your reason, but rather your intention to pray, your *will* to give him half an hour of your time.... The heart of prayer, then, is this intention to pray. And the act of prayer is essentially the act of giving oneself to God, the act of surrender.

If distracted, gently bring your thoughts back in focus. According to Dean (1989, p. 52) One “develops the habit of allowing the *act* of praying to focus the mind rather than requiring the focus of our mind to make the prayer authentic.”

It is not necessary for being with GOD to be always at church; we may make an oratory of our heart, wherein to retire from time to time, to converse with Him in meekness, humility, and love. Everyone is capable of such familiar conversation with GOD, some more, some less: He knows what we can do. Let us begin then; perhaps He expects but one generous resolution on our part. Have courage (Brother Lawrence, 7th letter).

Prayer through Words

Topics

To balance the many things one can offer to God in prayer, many writers have recommended a particular combination and order of issues. For example:

- The popular A.C.T.S. (n.d.) approach: One first offers adoration, then confession, then thanksgiving, and last, supplication.
- LaFountain (n.d.) suggests several creative approaches to worded prayer, including: Alpha and Omega Praise where one praises God by various biblical names listed from A to Z; Offering Thanks—*general* thanks for creation and blessings, *specific* thanks for blessings and benefits, and *tearful* thanks for life’s challenges; a Confession Checklist created from scripture; and, Claiming Biblical Promises in prayer.
- A.C.T.S. (n.d.). Internet: www.prayerguide.org.uk/actsmodel.htm

Praying for students—Some teachers pray for their students by name on a given day and time of the week, and some sit in each student’s seat and prays for each by name when the classroom is vacated.¹⁵ A teacher might pray for: Roommate peace and adjustment to college life; exams—not taken too seriously or lightly; clarity about future careers, major, and vocational calling; thankfulness for needs met on campus and educational opportunities; their families; homesickness; sexual purity; deaths and illnesses in their family over the semester; requests they make for prayer; etc.

Prayer calendar—One might create or adopt a prayer calendar which briefly lists different issues or individuals to pray for each day. Each prayer period of the day may prompt a prayer on a

¹⁵My thanks to David Morris, a teacher at David Lipscomb Middle School, for sharing this story.

different topic. William Law who founded a school for orphans in seventeenth century England, designated his prayer times and topics as follows (Paulsell, 1993, p. 45):

Morning prayer: Praise and thanksgiving
9:00 am: Humility
Noon: Universal love and intercession
3:00 pm: Conforming to God's will
Evening prayer: Self-examination and confession

Prayer book—A professor or school might compile or adopt a prayer book—The Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* has been used since the reformation, but there are many other prayer books or devotional books readily available in English:

- A fine contemporary prayer book is: Ruben P. Job & Norman Shawchuck (1990). *A Guide to Prayer for All God's People*. Nashville: Upper Room Books.
- Also see: www.prayingeachday.org/100Prayers.pdf

A few collections of prayers and reflections have been gathered for teachers and students, including one in 1733 by John Wesley for his students. The majority of these fit young children:

- Ginger Farry (1997). *A Teacher's Prayerbook: To Know and Love Your Students*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications.
- Elspeth Campbell Murphy (1979). *Prayer Meditations of a Teacher*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Philip A. Verhalen (ed.) (1998). *Prayers for the Classroom*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press.

A prayer book assembled for students at the University of Notre Dame and St. Mary's University includes prayers written by students:

- Thomas McNally & William G. Storey (1975). *Day By Day: The Notre Dame Prayerbook For Students*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press.

Lectio divina is an ancient practice of meditating on scripture or other works. It is a contemplative way of interacting with a reading, rather than simply reading a passage through. Some excellent introductions to praying scripture are:

- Michael Casey (1996). *Sacred Reading: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina*. Liguori, MO: Triumph Books.
- Mariano Magrassi (1998). *Praying the Bible: An Introduction to Lectio Divina* (trans. by Edward Hagman). Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press.
- M. Basil Pennington (1998). *Lectio Divina: Renewing the Ancient Practice of Praying the Scriptures*. New York: Crossroad/Herder & Herder.

Several helps exist for praying scripture, including:

- Beth Moore (2000). *Praying God's Word: Breaking Free From Spiritual Strongholds*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman.
- prayitsayit.net

Scripture has been most commonly used in *lectio* but poems, hymns, and other writings can be grist for prayer and contemplation as well, for example:

- Donald Davie (1981). *The New Oxford Book of Christian Verse*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Robert Atwan & Laurance Wiedner (1993). *Chapters into Verse: Poetry in English Inspired by the Bible*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Spiritual journaling—Writing down prayers, spiritual reflections, and life events has long been helpful in reminding God's people of His support and love. It may help one be more aware and observant of the spiritual dimensions of our life and those of students, and it shows a longitudinal perspective of the spiritual journey. A spiritual journal might be patterned after scripture—that is, it could contain narrative, poetry, dreams, letters, history, prayers, sermons, testimony, etc.

Prayer through Work

Brother Lawrence (1989) focused increasingly on God's love and less often on his faults and challenges at work; and he practiced a constant awareness of God's presence and conversed with Him, not just the times of liturgical prayer. Brother Lawrence admits that this constant awareness took years to cultivate and it allowed him to do distasteful tasks without emotional upheaval.

- Lawrence, Brother (1989). *The Practice of the Presence of God with Spiritual Maxims*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker/Revell.

A second approach to prayer through work is a recognition that life must be consistent with prayer to give glory to God, thus, one listens to God's call while teaching. de Waal (2001) offers an excellent explication on this topic.

- de Waal, Esther (2001). *Seeking God: The Way of St. Benedict*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press.

Perhaps the most direct and simple equation of prayer through work is the most difficult to grasp, that is, work itself as an offering (a prayer) to God.

Prayer through Service to Others

Seeing God in others creates a palpable type of prayerful teaching. It makes one aware that the students or colleagues one is working with are Jesus. This approach is evident in workers for social justice such as Mother Teresa or Dorothy Day. Pray for eyes to see students as Jesus.

If that is the way [Mary, Martha, and Peter's mother-in-law] gave hospitality to Christ, it is certain that that is the way it should still be given. Not for the sake of humanity. Not because it might be Christ who stays with us, comes to see us, takes up our time. Not because these people remind us of Christ...but because they *are* Christ, asking us to find room for Him, exactly as He did at the first Christmas (Ellsberg, 1992, p. 97).

- See: "Room for Christ" in Robert Ellsberg (ed.) (1992). *Dorothy Day: Selected Writings*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Prayer through Silence

Keating (1994) mentions eight methods of contemplative prayer, but he devotes most of his time to describing a type of contemplative prayer called "centering prayer." Centering prayer focuses on receiving rather than concentrating, on our intention to submit to God's presence rather than on concentrating on a biblical text or idea.

- Keating, Thomas (1994). *Intimacy with God*. New York: Crossroad
- Keating, Thomas (1992). *Open Mind, Open Heart: The Contemplative Dimension of the Gospel*. New York: Continuum

Quaker tradition is strong in silence as well. Although Quaker and Catholic theologies differ immensely, both offer contributions to prayer in silence. Three works which provide a Quaker interpretation of prayerful silence are:

- Patricia Loring (1997). *Listening Spiritually*. Washington Grove, MD: Openings Press.
- William A. Cooper (1990). *A Living Faith*. Richmond, IN: Friends United Press.
- Parker J. Palmer (1983). *To Know As We are Known: A Spirituality of Education*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Lacey (1988, pp. 27-33) gives six suggestions for encouraging faculty to welcome the Inward Teacher:

- Hold out the expectation for one another and for students that human beings can hear and follow the inner voice, that it is an expression of our deepest hopes, the response to our truest needs.
- Provide occasions which seem most propitious. Some of these ought to be established parts of the school schedule, such as a regular weekly community meeting for worship and daily worship in smaller groups.
- Surround ourselves with living examples of the encounter with the Inward Teacher.
- Deliberately fill the faculty, staff, and administration of our schools with people who live their lives in opening to the Inward Teacher and obedience.
- Search for the methods and disciplines which best open us to the inner voice
- Look for ways which balance inwardness with productive outward activity

Integrating Prayer into Classroom and the Curriculum

In terms of integrating worded prayer into the classroom itself, there are of course traditional approaches—such as praying orally in class—but even these can be approached creatively, such as praying for a different country each day, following a prayer calendar, or inviting students to read sections from a devotional book as a thought for the day prior to praying (reminiscent of the *Ratio Studorum*). One or more written prayers can be distributed to students in a syllabus or as a bookmark for a text, reminding them to be prayerful in their studies.

On the campus of Biola University, Coe (2000) creatively integrates prayer (and other spiritual disciplines) in course assignments. Coe (pp. 100-105) raises and attempts to address several concerns about integrating prayer and spiritual disciplines into the college curriculum: intrusiveness (it may invade student privacy), therapeutic (it may generate psychological material inappropriate for most professors to deal with), competency (faculty may not be equipped to make and monitor spiritually-oriented assignments), legalistic (it may lead to legalistic behavior among students), evaluative (grades may not be able to be accurately assigned), class size (classes may be too large to grade writing-intensive assignments), time (there may not be room for such an assignment due to the full amount of material to cover already), and appropriateness (the church may be the appropriate setting for such tasks, not the university).

- Coe, John (2000). “Intentional Spiritual Formation in the Classroom: Making Space for the Spirit in the University,” *Christian Education Journal*, 4, 85-110.

Prayer in work, service to others, and silence generally leaven a course and a teacher’s work with students, but if the focus is on students learning these avenues to prayer, one might explore resources on service learning or on the integration of faith and careers.