

Devotion

The word “devotion” is interpreted in multiple religions in different ways and is in fact packed with meaning that can help us to deepen our understanding of *this term* from spiritual perspective. Applied to spiritual life it contains a world of meaning. The word comes from the Latin root “*fidelitatem*” meaning, faithfulness, loyalty, faith, adherence, trustiness etc. The word is universally used for all kinds of worship directed towards God. In the religious world it is also used for faithfulness towards a saint, deity, or a holy person. In the secular sense it is often used in faithfulness to ones life partner, friends, family members or to ones profession. We might have heard people saying, ‘he is devoted to his wife and family’ or ‘devoted to one’s profession, work or responsibility’ etc.

In the Old Testament

In the Old Testament God commanded Moses in these words: "Do not worship any other gods besides me. Do not make idols of any kind, whether in the shape of birds or animals or fish. You must never worship or bow down to them, for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God who will not share your affection with any other god" (Exodus 20.3-5). This is a command to worship God alone; in a way a kind of demand for trust and faithfulness, which can be translated as devotion to God. This devotion to

God Almighty kept the Israelites faithful even when they were in diaspora.

In the Catholic Church

The Catholic Church considers liturgy as central to the life and mission of the Church and encourages Catholics to participate in it as often as possible, it also acknowledges the objective nature of the liturgy and encourages the cultivation of *pious acts* and *personal devotions*; the constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* states, "The spiritual life, however, is not limited solely to participation in the liturgy. ... Popular devotions of the Christian people are to be highly commended, provided they accord with the laws and norms of the Church, above all when they are ordered by the Apostolic See." It goes on to say: "These devotions should be so drawn up that they harmonize with the liturgical seasons, accord with the sacred liturgy, are in some fashion derived from it, and lead the people to it, since, in fact, the liturgy by its very nature far surpasses any of them"(*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 13). We have witnessed in the Catholic Church the rise of various types of devotions in multiple contexts.

Devotional Factors

Several factors shape the efficacy of devotional practices in eliciting feelings of devotion: a strong emotional appeal, a simplicity of form which puts them within the reach of all, the association with many others engaged in the same practices, and their derivation from the

example of others considered to lead a holy life. Sense of penances, fasting, mortification, prayers, pilgrimages, recitation, reading of holy material, meditation etc. comprise many other factors that contribute to the intensity of devotions.

History of Devotions

Since the Middle Ages, Popes have encouraged devotions such as Eucharistic Adoration, the Rosary and the Stations of the Cross. However, the position of the Church with respect to the primacy of liturgy over specific devotions has always been maintained. On the other hand, pious devotions have influenced some important parts of the Catholic calendar such as the feast of Corpus Christi which arose after petitions by those following the devotion; or various Marian feasts that gradually appeared with the growth of devotions.

Types of Devotions

To list a few devotions we normally practice are as follows: Liturgical prayer, Liturgy, Eucharist, Eucharistic devotions, Liturgy of the Hours, Lectio Divina, Praying with Scriptures, The Lord's Prayer, Marian Devotions, Centering Prayer, Labyrinths (Meditation is defined by Laurence Freeman, O.S.B, as a universal spiritual

wisdom entered into through silence, stillness and simplicity. A meditation or prayer labyrinth enhances that experience by utilizing one of several basic design structures), Ignatian Meditation, Carmelite Prayer etc.

According to St. Augustine, we need not pray for what we need because God already knows what we need before we even ask. Instead, we ought to pray, he suggests, to increase our desire for God, and so that we might be able to receive what He is preparing to give us. "The deeper our faith, the stronger our hope, the greater our desire, the larger will be our capacity to receive the gift, which is very great indeed. The more fervent the desire, the more worthy will be its fruits. When the Apostle tells us: Pray without ceasing (1 *Thes*5:16), he means this: Desire unceasingly that life of happiness which is nothing if not eternal, and ask it of him alone who is able to give it." This is what we really understand by devotion, increase our faithfulness, our dedication and surrender to God. This consists also perseverance, effort and determined determination. Devotion makes one come closer to God and increases desire to do His will.

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