

REFLECTION

BY FR. ROY CIMAGALA

A COMMON complaint people have with respect to their duty to pray is that they have hardly anything to consider during their prayer. "I have nothing to say and neither do I hear anything in my prayer. I just go blank and empty and bored." That's what some people, especially the young, say.

I usually tell them that I also feel that way many times in my prayer, but rather than do nothing about it, I consider the predicament a challenge. My prayer may feel like I am just crawling in some dark hole, but I crawl just the same until I get to see some light and to breathe quite freely.

It's important that our prayer is considered as necessary and indispensable as breathing. This is how to make prayer very personal and abiding. Short of that, it's very understandable to deem prayer as a useless burden.

But we actually never run out of material for prayer. The very feeling of boredom and helplessness is a very fertile ground for prayer to grow. If we would react to this predicament with humility, that's when we can easily become intimate and sincere with God, and prayer can spontaneously start.

Actually, with just a little effort, we can already pray. For sure, we will always have some plans and intentions that we can pray for. They can be something personal, or related to the family, our work, our relations with others.

And then we can start to be concerned with bigger things, like the issues in politics, business and the economy, society and the world in general and the Church herself.

We should try our best to train ourselves to be interested in others and in things. It's when we run out of this interest that our prayer also would run out of steam. This will require effort and discipline, but it would all be worthwhile.

We have to be wary of our tendency to simply think of our own selves, for that will surely lead us to a dead end insofar as material for prayer is concerned. These days, we have to do conscious effort to fight against the continuing bombardment of distractions, like the games and other things, that undermine our desire for prayer.

What can also help is to sit down for a while and make a plan of how to do our prayer. Definitely, we need to have some topics ready, as well as the appropriate materials like books. We can list down the intentions to pray for.

We also need to choose the appropriate time and place for our prayer. And definitely, we have to work on the proper dispositions. In this regard, it is important that we continually reinforce our faith, and enrich it with other acts of piety, like making little acts of mortification and penance.

To sustain our life of prayer, we should avoid relying only on some spontaneous reasons to pray. Our prayer life should bank on solid convictions. This is how we can pray in all seasons, fair or foul. This is how our prayer would become very personal and abiding.