



Parish of the Nativity of the Lord

Book+Circle – July 2024

About the Book – Opening to God – a Guide to prayer – Fr Thomas Green

Father Thomas Green's 'Opening to God – a guide to prayer' he uses exercises, techniques and reflections of two major streams of Christian Spirituality, the Carmelites and Ignatian, to consider 'How do you pray and What is prayer?'

How did the book make us feel?

For some, the book about how to pray made a lot of sense and the idea of practicing, or rather preparing for prayer in contemplation, by setting time aside and praying in silence spoke to them.

For others, notions of practicing for prayer and taking time out of the daily lives maybe not practical anymore as we lead busy lives and now we are encouraged to pray naturally and spontaneously.

We concurred that there is no single right way to pray - there is validity to both quiet and busy prayer whenever we wish to talk to God.

The book raised notions of 'How does God speak to me?'; 'Is Prayer relevant?' and even 'Can prayer be uncomfortable at times?' which triggered other thoughts of whether we are 'doing it right'? So we felt tested but as the author commented "The desire to pray is itself a clear sign of the Lord's presence...and is an opening of the mind and heart to God"

What did we think were the book's main strengths?

The majority of us felt the book was well written; manageable at 110 pages; non-emotional - a practical guide on how to prepare for prayer and how to pray.

Some felt that whilst they enjoyed the first half of the book as it made sense, when it came to the practical section in the second half of the book they felt lost. Others, on the other hand, felt the book was harder to get into at the beginning as it took a while to feel comfortable with the rhythm.

All felt the epilogue was very good and that the analogies helped us to understand what we have experienced when we can't put our thoughts into words. The book triggered thoughts of when God doesn't answer our prayers, we could get cross when things go wrong. The book helped us to understand to look at the overall journey and that God would never lead us to seek something which was impossible.

What did we think were the book's main weaknesses?

The preamble Introduction was far too long. The readers just wanted to get into the book and didn't need to summarise to the extent it had. The majority felt you can't be taught how to pray - 'seek and you will find'. As long as you are searching, and the will is there, that is the only important thing.

Would we read other books by this author and would we recommend this book to others?

Yes. Even though the book was written about fifty years ago it did not seem dated.

We all agreed that the book would be helpful for someone who would like to consider how they pray and have the desire to change in how they pray, it would probably be helpful for a regular mass goer who wants to deepen their prayer life.

Next Book –6th September – After 10.30am mass - Small meeting room, St Joseph's

Next Read - The Lost Years by Mary Higgins Clark