FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Religion

Prayer: Our Deepest Longing
Ronald Rolheiser
Franciscan Media
978-1-61636-657-5
(July 31, 2013)

His encouraging voice makes this priest's guide an effective tool for Christians developing a more personal relationship to religious practice.

In *Prayer: Our Deepest Longing*, Roman Catholic priest Ronald Rolheiser avoids the superficial how-to methods and focuses instead on clarifying the deep longing in the human heart for communion and intimacy with God. Using a compassionate and encouraging style, Rolheiser redirects believers' common misconceptions and misunderstandings about prayer to the freedom, fulfillment, and necessity of spending time with the Heavenly Father.

Rolheiser begins by addressing some of the cultural issues that affect attitudes about prayer. America's fast-pace lifestyle leaves people expecting a vibrant prayer life as well, leaving a feeling of boredom when emotions and overwhelming joy do not occur. Part of the problem, Rolheiser explains, is that believers are hesitant to express their real feelings—anger, frustration, confusion, grief, or anxiety—and instead tell God what they think God wants to hear.

Shame is also a factor in avoiding prayer. When people feel that they somehow do not measure up to God's expectations, an inconsistent prayer pattern emerges as an avoidance mechanism. This results in refraining from seeking a deeper relationship with God through intimate prayer. He stresses the need for quiet times of contemplation that are free of distractions, so Christians can listen for the soft, endearing voice of God. It is in these quiet moments when the believer experiences the closeness and fullness of God's love and acceptance.

In addition to "priestly" prayer (praying about and for the world), Rolheiser notes the necessity of "affective" prayer (private and personal). Affective prayer may take many forms—mediation, devotional, or centering prayers—and the Christian should strive to develop a boldness that creates a comfort in asking for help but also be willing to surrender completely to God's will.

Rolheiser's gentle teaching breaks down into some basic concepts. The believer should not worry about reaching some unattainable standards of righteousness before feeling worthy to pray, and openness and honesty with God is more important than trying to achieve an emotional experience. In fact, Rolheiser strongly emphasizes establishing a ritual of prayer and a consistent daily prayer time; both of which will provide the strength and foundation needed to draw nearer to God.

Although *Prayer* is a slim book, the guidance Rolheiser provides is meaty and scriptural. He keeps his stories and explanations on a common reader's level and does not try to impress with lofty, pious terminology or concepts. He makes his points succinctly and clearly, slides into the next segment, and weaves the ideas together. *Prayer* will help readers gain a clearer picture of the importance of prayer and encourage them not to be content with just a surface relationship with God.

Jeff Friend