

VII Put God in your diary

It seems a very strange idea to put God in your diary but those words were offered to me by my spiritual director when my life was particularly hectic. Some wise person once said that he prayed for about an hour everyday, unless he was very busy. Then he prayed for two hours!

One of the things that can actually keep us apart from God is our diaries – a constant round of appointments and meetings. A possible remedy is actually to make an appointment with God, say, for an hour each week. As with other appointments, the important thing is not to make excuses but to keep it. If, as Christians, we believe that God is important is there anything more vital then spending quality time with her?

Prayer is not about some esoteric technique, but about deepening our relationship with God. Moreover, we encounter God not by our own actions or decisions. It is not we who encounter God, it is God who encounters us. There are many biblical examples of which Saul on the Damascus road is the most dramatic. Our encounters tend not to be so dramatic. At times, nothing seems to happen but at least you have been present. You may not remember what you ate two days ago but it was very important that you ate.

We cannot control the presence of God or decide how or when we encounter him. Our part is to lay ourselves open to this encounter. We make ourselves available. Some say that prayer is wasting time with God. Is it wasting time to spend quality time with your friends, your partner, your children or grandchildren? Sometimes nothing seems to happen but you have been with them.

Ann Lewin in her book of poems (*Watching for the Kingfisher*) likens prayer to watching for a kingfisher. We have seen a flash of blue in the past now all you can do is be where he is likely to appear again. 'There is space, silence and expectancy.....sometimes, when you've almost stopped expecting it, a flash of brightness gives encouragement'.

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