

BOOK REVIEW

In All Things: Everyday Prayers of Jesuit High School Students

Michael J. Daley & Lee P. Yeazell, Eds.
Loyola Press, 2003
\$10.95, 214 pages

Reviewed by Malcolm McCluskey

Jesuit high schools in the United States have a strong reputation for offering young men and women an education that embraces strong academic achievement and spiritual development. Students enrolled in these schools are expected to meet high academic standards and apply the lessons learned in the classroom to their daily lives. For this to happen, a strong spiritual foundation is necessary. In the book, *In All Things: Everyday Prayers of Jesuit High School Students*, this spiritual foundation is illustrated in the prayers written by students from Jesuit high schools throughout the United States.

The book begins with a brief description and examples of the four types of prayers the reader encounters in the book: petition, contrition, thanksgiving, and praise. This is followed by a brief set of instructions as to how to use the prayers in daily meditation. The methods of prayer used throughout the book reflect the Jesuit tradition of seeking God in all things. Useful suggestions are also given to help the reader process the sentiments expressed in the prayer. Upon completing the daily meditation, the reader is encouraged to compose an original prayer based on the meditation.

When navigating through the book, the reader is able to encounter the high school student in the different areas of the student's social and spiritual development. While one prayer focuses on the need for forgiveness of the student who is "sorry for the times when I gossiped, disregarded others' feelings to make myself better...and for the times I took advantage of my family" (p. 14), another expresses thanks for the opportunity to attend a Jesuit school and gratitude for the lessons learned while in attendance at that school to be a "person for others" (p. 2). The complexities of teenage life and the needs of teenagers become immediately clear when one reads "The Prayer for Separated Parents." Here the reader learns that students living in this reality must balance their time between each parent, respond to parental arguments, and hope "that one day they will become friends" (p. 113). While some

prayers focus on daily school pressures to fit in, earn good grades, maintain strong relationships, and remember information for a test, other prayers express the more complicated issues of dealing with the death of a friend, the hope for social justice for the world's poor, the need for peace on earth, and the desire for a greater knowledge and relationship with God.

This section of the book is concluded with an explanation of the Ignatian Daily Examen. The Examen is a five-step method of prayer that walks the individual through a prayerful process to (a) evaluate the events of the day, (b) give thanks to God for all the events of the day, (c) review the positive and negative feelings experienced, (d) reflect and pray on those feelings, and (e) end with an insight into the events of the next day and a prayer for assistance for that day. The inclusion of this process is useful for the reader because it gives a very simple model to use in daily life and reassures the busy person that this process does not consume much time.

If there is a critique of this book, it would be in the placement of the explanation of the Jesuit "Characteristics of a Graduate at Graduation" at the near end of the book. This is a statement that was created for Jesuit high schools to express "the characteristics that the graduate will have moved toward acquiring during [the student's] time at the school" (p. 155). These characteristics include being open to growth, intellectually competent, religious, loving, and committed to doing justice. It would be helpful for the reader who does not come from a Jesuit background to be aware of these characteristics as the reader journeys through the book. Placing this explanation at the beginning would give the reader better insight into the Jesuit tradition and culture and allow the reader to form a better relationship with the authors of these prayers.

More formal prayers and meditations are also made available to the reader at the end of the book. While this book is highly focused on the Jesuit tradition, more common and universal prayers are also included. These prayers range from the Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi to the Prayer of Oscar Romero. The inclusion of these prayers demonstrates the connection of the Jesuit tradition to other traditions in the Catholic Church.

The editors of this book should be commended for the range of prayers and experiences that were included. *In All Things* is a book that teachers in Catholic high schools should use to guide their students in prayer. It can also be used as a resource for an educator to delve into the minds and hearts of high school students and understand the complexities of their lives. This book is also a tool for students to understand and share in the experiences of other students. While the prayers are limited in theological sophistication, they do show the great spiritual depth of high school students. This book demon-

strates the strength of the Jesuit tradition and how it permeates the hearts and minds of students in Jesuit high schools.

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Simple Ways to Pray: Spiritual Life in the Catholic Tradition

Emilie Griffin
Rowman & Littlefield, 2006
\$20.95, 206 pages

Reviewed by Craig Horning

Simple Ways to Pray: Spiritual Life in the Catholic Tradition by Emilie Griffin is part of the “Come and See Series” from Sheed and Ward, which is modeled on Jesus’ compassionate question: “What do you seek?” and his invitation to “come and see” the world through the eyes of faith. In this spirit, Griffin’s work is a gentle and informative invitation to let down our guard and give ourselves permission to ask such questions as “Why should I pray? What is prayer? What holds us back? How do I know I am really praying?” (p. vii). While these questions may seem elementary, they call us to examine the deepest parts of ourselves and what it means to be Catholic, Christian, spiritual, and human. Griffin’s work is appropriate for those with limited experience in prayer or prayer in the Catholic tradition, as well as those with seasoned Catholic prayer lives.

Griffin’s overarching goal is to provide the reader with a glimpse into the “treasure box” of the Catholic prayer tradition with a focus on accessibility for people in various stages of spiritual development. While she addresses a broad audience—the entire Catholic community in addition to Christians from a variety of denominations and willing non-Christians—this review focuses on the specific application to Catholic education. The book is organized topically by chapter, including a wide range of subtopics from Eucharistic adoration to *Lectio Divina*. Five interwoven themes emerged throughout my engagement with the text. I briefly touch upon each of these self-defined