

# *Finding Joy in our Prayer*

## **Week 4: Praying in the Outdoors and through Creation**

In this next episode in the series “Finding joy in prayer” I have been asked to share some of my thoughts.

For me, prayer is a conversation between God and myself; a quiet reflection which stills my mind, “sets me right” and, once in a while, solves a knotty issue or brings a fresh perspective to the fore. Who better to talk to than He who is a constant companion, trustworthy and faithful? And where better to have these conversations but in the midst of His Creation?

Those who know me are aware of my love of the outdoors: sacred buildings have their place but, for me, the vast and ever-changing natural world offers so much more inspiration for prayer and the space to be fully engaged.

Join me as I garden outdoors...at this time of year the church driveway is full of mud and decaying leaves yet as you shovel up the “dirt” heaps of little worms are revealed, feeding on the dying leaves and creating compost - isn't that amazing? The daffodils are poking through the soil as the snowdrops and crocuses die back. Bulbs and corms so small yet packed with enough nutrients to produce a shoot strong enough to push up through the soil along with a beautiful flower. Think of the amount of stuff you'd need in your rucksack for a similar journey and imagine the patience required to wait for your annual moment to emerge before disappearing for another year. Again, amazing.

Looking and experiencing all this, and so much more as the days of the year go by, lifts my spirits and I find myself expressing joyful gratitude at my surroundings. As we look to celebrate Mothering Sunday, thinking not only of our birth mothers but also of Mother Earth, I pray for God's joy to fill our hearts.

“O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder consider all the works Thy hand hath made” – How great Thou art.

I also enjoy walking; the higher and more remote the better! Walking is a great way to have a conversation with anyone, especially God.

Take a deep breath, exhale all the rubbish that blocks your prayer life. Take gentle steps. (Not the rushing about, busy steps when you're catching a bus or dashing round the shops) A restful rhythm- heel, toe, heel toe. Feel the ground beneath your feet and find beauty & joy in that.

Embracing the sounds and sights around, I then find so much to pray about.

I appreciate that not everyone has the mobility to walk long distances. A short walk down a familiar path, or even walking a route in your imagination, can help in this meditative walking.

Some use a labyrinth to guide their walk; Labyrinth walking is an ancient practice used for spiritual centring, contemplation, and prayer. Entering the serpentine path of a labyrinth, you walk slowly while quieting your mind and focusing on a spiritual question or prayer. – “Walking the sacred path” by Lauren Artress.

Watch the changes in nature, look at the shapes in the trees, the clouds, the shadows. Feel the breeze, the sun (!), the drizzle and pray as you walk.

Focus on something that has been troubling you and the solution often comes to mind when you least expect it.

Psalm 121 “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help”

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