

Oremus Lecture Talk #5: Spiritual Senses

February 2, 2025, Sts. Anne and Joachim Catholic Church

Jeremiah 29:11-14 (English Standard Version): For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

1. Summary of previous lectures

- a. “As the body cannot live without nourishment, so our soul cannot stay spiritually alive without prayer.” -St. Augustine
- b. Mission: Fall in love with God
- c. Lecture 3: Lectio Divina
 - i. Lectio (Reading): Read the text three times, slowly consuming it
 - ii. Meditatio (Meditation): What is the Word saying to me, and what are the implications in my life?
 - iii. Oratio (Conversation): A sharing between friends, the persons of the Trinity, saints, angels.
 - iv. Contemplatio (Contemplation): A resting with the Lord, not talking but seeking peace.
- d. Lecture 4: Relational Prayer (ARRR)
 - i. Acknowledge God’s presence, or what I’m thinking, feeling, or desiring
 - ii. Relate what I’m acknowledging in the passage with someone in prayer, for example it could be the Father, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Mary, another saint
 - iii. Receive from the Lord, could be a voice, a thought, Scripture passage, memory
 - iv. Respond to the Lord, act in some way as a consequence of the prayer

2. Week 5: Spiritual Senses in Prayer

- a. Main goal, use our imagination and memory to place ourselves in a scene in Scriptures
 - i. “Meditation engages thought, imagination, emotion, and desire. This mobilization of faculties is necessary in order to deepen our convictions of faith, prompt the conversion of our heart, and strengthen our will to follow Christ. Christian prayer tries above all to meditate on the mysteries of Christ, as in Lectio Divina or the rosary. This form of prayerful reflection is of great value, but Christian prayer should go further: to the knowledge of the love of the Lord Jesus, to union with him.” (CCC 2708)
 - ii. “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it...” (1 John 1:1-4)
- b. Our physical senses can correspond to the spiritual senses, using imagination to see, hear, taste, touch, and feel.
- c. Imagination is distinct from fantasy
 - i. Fantasy is when our spiritual senses are disconnected from reality and truth
 - ii. Imagination is when our spiritual senses are connected to reality and truth
 - iii. We cannot force stories or images to unfold, the Holy Spirit leads our imagination, not ourselves.
- d. St. Ignatius of Loyola instructs us to use the spiritual senses to see the people in the passage, to hear what they say, and to observe the actions of the event
 - i. As an example, the mysteries of the Rosary can lead us into meditation on the life of Jesus, more than recitation of words.
 - ii. How do we trust our imagination?

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1. Subjective experience must be tested and conformed to God, the Apostolic Tradition, the Sacred Scriptures, the Magisterium, objective truth.
2. Cannot be a contradiction between private prayer and public revelation; if a contradiction exists, my private prayer is not being led by the Lord.

e. Example: Jesus walks on the water from Matthew 14:22ff

i. Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

ii. What do you...

1. See? Storm clouds, boat, Jesus, waves
2. Hear? Splashing of water, murmuring and concerned fishermen
3. Smell? Scent of the water, lake, those who spend time on the water can use the unique smells of the lake to enhance prayer
4. What is it like to be on a boat, "beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them"?
5. What do I feel, fear? What is it like to see Peter banter with Jesus? What would it be like to be Peter? To say the words: "Lord, save me."

3. Homework

a. Pray with the following passages, one a day

- i. Day 1: John 20:19-29
- ii. Day 2: John 3:22-30
- iii. Day 3: Luke 17:11-19
- iv. Day 4: Matthew 14:22-33
- v. Day 5: Matthew 19:16-26
- vi. Day 6: John 13:31-38
- vii. Day 7: John 18:15-18, 25-27

b. With the prayer, answer the questions:

- i. The "strongest" thought or feeling during my prayer was...
- ii. My heart "rested" when...
- iii. I sensed the Lord was telling me...
- iv. I ended the prayer wanting...

4. Additional Resources

- a. *An Ignatian Introduction to Prayer: Scriptural Reflections According to the Spiritual Exercises*, Timothy Gallagher. Crossroad Publishing Company, 2007