

DIFFICULT WORK AND INTERCESSION PRAYER

1. There is much difficult work in this world. Maybe we should put it in another manner. Of course there is really difficult work to do, but most of the work is not or should be that difficult and nevertheless time and again it simply is difficult. The work becomes difficult, because we are doing it amidst of stress, being stressed. That is always a nuisance. It is especially so, when we are doing work in a voluntary setting, working with others, eventually young people

2. Stress, in fact, is always rivalry. When we are stressed, we are rivaling, with our task, our aims and goals, with our colleagues, our bosses, with the people we work with, and, as we see it, work for. We are rivaling with the people we are working with, and, in our consciousness eventually, for. That is as such already very painful, because we are meaning so well, and nevertheless we are stressed.

3. Stress, rivaling anyway, is always counterproductive. It is bad for our health. Stress might be a challenge, which we overcome, but when we regularly feel stressed, the situation not changing, it certainly is bad for our health. It is bad equally, for everybody we work with. We are already rivaling with them, because otherwise we would not feel stressed, but our being stressed makes the rivalry worse. It is bad for the goal we are working for, because the aim, the goal of our working together disappears in the rivaling. So it is very important to get ride of this stress altogether.

4. When we pray, we direct ourselves to God, to the Lord. We go out of the difficulties of our life, out of our rivaling with adversities, with people (at least, of course, when we are not rivaling with God himself, claiming from him what we wish him to do), coming into the mimesis with him, asking him to give us peace, to give us space, to deliver us from the worries of this world. In fact, in directing us to him, we come in the mimesis with him, with his being outside of rivalry. So we find, see new possibilities to go further, free from stress and rivalry.

5. In the intercession, we take the other with us. Being in the mimesis with us, who is in the mimesis with God, he/she too comes into freedom. She/he too, is more or less delivered from stress and rivalry, and finds freedom.

A young boy in a Dutch village got bone cancer. He had extremely much pain and it was said to him that his leg had to be amputated. The village is an exception nearly in the Netherlands, a real community. People decided to come every evening to the Church and have an intercession service for the boy. During that week his pain disappeared and he decided that he did not wish the amputation. He is healed. The intercession of everybody around him brought him out of the fighting, what in fact every illness is, and so he was saved.

6. Intercession prayer is very real. The persons for whom is prayed need not know always consciously, that people pray for them. They know it somewhere in their bodies and it does its work. It even is not necessary that those for whom is prayed believe consciously that the prayer is important for them or even believe in God or Christ. It nevertheless does its work.

Cf: David McClelland reports that when college students were shown a film of Mother Teresa tending to the sick and dying poor in Calcutta, their immune functioning immediately increased and remained elevated one hour later.

McClelland noted in an interview that the effect occurred even in people who reported consciously disliking Mother Teresa: "The results means that she was contacting these disapproving people in a part of their brains that they were unaware of and that was still responding to the strength of her loving care". Robert Ornstein and David Sobel: *The healing Brain*, London, 1988, 159-160.

We all have such hidden places in our brain, which show that they are there when we are not threatened. Intercession never threatens. If it does, then intercession is part of the power game and no intercession at all.

7. Even if we don't know that people pray for us, it might "work". We never know what we know and don't know. And it is very important to know that praying is going on in this world. There are, too in our so-called modern world, places where people pray, where is space, where freedom is given, where unknowingly, is prayed for us. Knowing this means partaking in this freedom.

Off course that is the big thing orders did during the ages. It is the importance of intercession prayer during the services. And here comes my dream, that Corrymeela has a place where always are two members of the community, praying for the members and their tasks in this world, for Northern Ireland, for the world.

PS. I realize that I should have written about the prayer group, a group of people coming together, once or more often every week, to pray for people fulfilling a difficult task. A group praying together and that regularly, so that you can count upon them and can be with them because you know where they are, has a very big mass. They, the people of the group, can be extremely helpful for the workers.

Another point is, that intercession prayer, as far as I understand it, is always prayer for the people doing the work and so for the contents of the work the reason why the work is done. Not the other way round. People are never functions of good aims, however important these aims are.