

"Your To Do List"

February 6, 2016

Fr. Keith Streifel

I like to look at prayer books. It's not usually that I feel I need to find the words to express myself to God; although I often wish I could express myself better to my fellow human beings. God, I know, understands me. He knows my meaning before the word is on my tongue.

The reason I like to look through prayer books is that I don't always understand me, and I wonder whether there might be some insight which a person who is holier than I might have offered to God in his or her prayer which I might adopt or at least try on. I want to do this because God doesn't say to me, "just be yourself," but rather "be holy for I am holy." (I Pt 1:16, quoting Lv 11:44 and 19:2.) If I try to be myself without reference to Him, I will be somebody else.

I was looking through a book of prayers awhile ago and found something called "Subjects for Daily Meditation." This title is found in the Manual of Prayers developed after the Councils of Baltimore, whence also the Baltimore Catechism. I think of it more as an admonition than a list of meditations, but that which we are told to do bears meditating.

The first line is generally translated into English "Remember, Christian Soul, that you have this day, and every day of your life:...", In oldest version I could discover it was much simpler, and I was tempted to re-translate it as "Your to-do list today:...", but I don't want to rob anyone of the language I found so striking, so I'll just give you the Baltimore version.

I found it very striking, as in striking my heart with desire and compunction. As St. Paul told St. Timothy to "fan into flame" the gift of God he had received, so I felt a certain urging to breathe air on my own embers when I read this prayer:

Subjects for Daily Meditation

Remember, Christian soul, that thou hast this day, and every day of thy life:

- God to glorify,
- Jesus to imitate,
- The Angels and Saints to invoke.
- A soul to save,
- A body to mortify,
- Sins to expiate,
- Virtues to acquire,
- Hell to avoid,
- Heaven to gain,
- Eternity to prepare for,
- Time to profit by.
- Neighbors to edify,
- The world to despise,
- Devils to combat,
- Passions to subdue,
- Death perhaps to suffer,
- Judgment to undergo.