

## **The Essence of Prayer from Prayer by Friedrich Heiler (Inclusive Language)**

- Prayer appears in history in an astonishing multiplicity of forms;
- As the calm collectedness of a devout individual soul, and as the ceremonial liturgy of a great congregation;
- As an original creation of a religious genius, and as an imitation on the part of a simple, average religious person;
- As the spontaneous expression of upspringing religious experiences, and as the mechanical recitation of an incomprehensible formula;
- As bliss and ecstasy of heart, and as painful fulfillment of the law;
- As the involuntary discharge of an overwhelming emotion, and as the voluntary concentration on a religious object;
- As loud shouting and crying, and as still, silent absorption;
- As artistic poetry, and as stammering speech;
- As the flight of the spirit to the supreme Light, and as a cry out of the deep distress of the heart;
- As joyous thanksgiving and ecstatic praise, and as humble supplication for forgiveness and compassion;
- As a childlike entreaty for life, health, and happiness, and as an earnest desire for power in the moral struggle of existence;
- As a simple petition for daily bread, and as an all-consuming yearning for God Godself;
- As a selfish wish, and as an unselfish solicitude for a sister or brother;
- As wild cursing and vengeful thirst, and as heroic intercession for personal enemies and persecutors;
- As a stormy clamor and demand, and as joyful renunciation and holy serenity;
- As a desire to change God's will and make it chime with our petty wishes, and as a self-forgetting vision of and surrender to the Highest Good;

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▪ As the timid entreaty of the sinner before a stern judge, and as the trustful talk of a child with a kind parent;

As swelling phrases of politeness and flattery before an unapproachable Sovereign, and as a free outpouring in the presence of a friend who cares;

▪ As the humble petition of a servant to a powerful master, and as the ecstatic converse of the bridegroom with the heavenly Bride.

### **Praying**

It doesn't have to be  
the blue iris, it could be  
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few  
small stones; just  
pay attention, then patch

a few words together and don't try  
to make them elaborate, this isn't  
a contest but the doorway

into thanks, and a silence in which  
another voice may speak.

**Mary Oliver**

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