

# “Do you pray? Why?”

## “TRACES OF THE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE”

### 4. Prayer

by Luigi Giussani\*

Verse 14 of Acts I shows us the community of the apostles awaiting what Christ had promised. “All these joined together in assiduous prayer.”

Those who discover their own helplessness live in community and are aware that their lives are shared with others only when they have *the presentiment of something beyond their own situations* that can resolve these situations. A community can come about only when there is a common expectancy (even a man and woman who truly love each other have this unshakeable presentiment; otherwise they do not take their relationship seriously).

Our experiences, when really taken seriously, are painful, for they make us discover that we are full of needs, unresolved problems, sorrow, and ignorance. If these experiences are truly taken seriously, they unequivocally require something “else,” something “beyond”; that is, they possess a genuine religious dimension.

If our experiences are taken seriously they are an authentic prophecy (expectancy, hope) of what we do not yet have.

What we still lack is the *meaning* of all our experiences. And we await it, perhaps unconsciously. If we are truly aware of this expectancy, of our human incapacity and of what our nature relentlessly tells us, then this expectancy is bound to become prayer. It will become prayer to a mysterious Other who will be able to help and will provide a solution. It will become prayer to that God who elicits our question and who will provide the answer.

Thus, prayer is simple petition, entreaty; our most simple, heartfelt, and fundamental act of human awareness. The most realistic person is the one who prays: that person takes his or her experience seriously.

Prayer is also *a plea made together, in common*. The discovery of our powerlessness to achieve happiness is also the discovery of what we have most in common with all others: this powerlessness is what is most human in each of us.

Thus, even the disposition to await the help of that Other, is shared by all; it is communitarian by its very nature, so much so that no one can have that disposition without feeling himself or herself as “one heart”<sup>1</sup> with everyone.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 4:32.

\* Source: *The Journey to Truth Is an Experience*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal 2006, pp. 57-58.