

Pray First

By Nicole Rose

Several years ago I was working in the public schools of Maui, Hawaii with children who had autism spectrum disorders. I'd been contemplating on how to resolve a particular problem, when I looked up and saw a fellow staff member wearing a t-shirt that said, "Pray First." I felt energetically slapped in the face by Heaven. How many times in my life had the idea of going to God *first* simply slipped my mind? Instead, like so many people, I'd run the gamut of possible ways to solve a problem, putting in a great effort, and finally when things just weren't working out and I felt at the end of my rope, I'd internally call out in desperation for Divine intervention of some kind—any kind, just so long it would "fix" the things that I seemed unable to. I was so struck by the utter simplicity of such an epically wise statement that I went home that day and posted a sign on my wall using plain white paper and tape that said, "Pray First, *no matter what the problem!*"

I am still working on following that creed. If I pray first, it doesn't mean I then sit back and do nothing and expect answers from Heaven to fall out of the sky. It means that at the outset, I've handed over the perceived problem to God, who knows far more about what's really up than I do. That means that as I now set about doing whatever I can to solve the situation, I've already made conscious contact with the Divine regarding the issue. I've clarified that Heaven is working with me on the perfect resolve and therefore I am more likely to be receptive to guidance and to notice when signs and signals relating to potential solutions show up in my path because I've opened and ignited the channels of communication with "On High." Why on earth would anyone want to struggle alone with such limitations of perspective when we could have all knowing, all loving intelligence on our side the whole way through?

Recently I was engaged with an ACIM study group in a neighboring town, and we considered what life might be like if each of us literally turned inward to the Holy Spirit or Jesus for guidance on absolutely everything, every step of the way. I confessed to the group that I had not been living that way and to my surprise, so did everyone else. The comment came back, "Nobody's doing that," and yet that is exactly what Jesus tells us to do in The Course. Years ago, when Helen Schucman was scribing ACIM, Jesus bid her to ask for guidance even on what clothes to wear that day. Can you imagine the conscious connection each of us would have if we were speaking to the Divine that often? Jesus makes it clear in The Course that if we really want to wake up, we must put all our Faith in Him and seek guidance every step of the way with all situations. That sounds an awful lot like *praying first*, if you ask me. It also seems like a sure way to *pray without ceasing*. Either of these prayer activities is likely to cultivate a strong and powerful current of insight and life-giving energy between oneself and the Divine.

The more we pray, the more God appears in the world around us, through other people, through situations, through the miraculous resolve of apparent problems, and usually with very little effort on our part. It works this way because we've already put in the effort to pray, to put our attention on the Divine, to remember first cause in all circumstances. By praying first, we recognize the real power in our lives, and we set ourselves up to win because we know God is in the outcome, whatever form it takes.