

Early Morning Prayer

It has been the practice and tradition of monastics and spiritual seekers around the world for thousands of years to greet each new day with early morning prayer. Often before the sun breaks the eastern horizon the seeker rises from bed and performs a special prayer rite in a special place. (Beating the sun out of bed is, of course, a bit easier to do in winter months.)

While each prayer offering during the course of the day is important in its own way, early morning prayer has special significance. It has long been known that each person has spiritual connections with every other person and with the earth itself. As such, there is a collective influence on the day ahead.

The purpose of early morning prayer is to bring the seeker into the presence of the oncoming day with an open heart and an open mind. If we can arrive at this point we can influence the coming day greatly. There is an incredible amount of power flowing through the present moment. As a seeker, our only purpose is to be truly in the present moment where the power resides – not burdened with reliving the events of yesterday, or worried about what's supposed to happen today or tomorrow. These are things not in reality and will interfere with the possibilities of the present.

But we are human, and it is not always easy to clear our minds and recapture the present moment. Thus, the prayer routine allows for this. Each morning liturgy should be designed to allow the memories and worries in our heads to flow as they will through our minds for a while. Resisting them usually doesn't work. Let them flow and allow them to dissipate on their own. Reminding ourselves that these things can be dealt with later often helps. So, part of the morning service is some quiet time, some meditative time, to allow the mind to settle. Some people will even use physical exercise to "clear the head."

Then return to silence and begin to get a feel for the coming day. Really, our only purpose is just to be present. We needn't try to change anything, as the ideal situation will be for us to be a conduit through which God can do His work this day. We will become His hands, His eyes, His voice and His heart regardless of where the day takes us.

Our awareness of the day and our place in it creates a great deal of influence. Today we will function as one part of a vast system of things happening. We are an important piece of what will transpire this day, even though we may not think so. Even a smile to someone else will be critical to make this day turn out the way it should. Our presence can settle this day, just as sitting next to a friend who is ill, or a child who is taking a nap. Our presence in the moment adds an assurance to the day that calms it down.

Activities of early morning prayer can vary, depending on our temperament and interests. Morning prayer can include singing, reading, praying, writing poetry, or just watching the sunrise. If it works the way it should, we end up feeling renewed, that this day will be unique. We should be feeling peaceful, and part of the overall scope of nature. We should feel welcoming to new things and the creativity that exists in the day ahead. We should feel part of God's family, an important piece in the entire scope of His creation, no less or more important than the other people we meet today – just brothers and sisters of His family.