NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Is that the voice of God you hear?

Tom Gallagher | May. 2, 2013 NCR Today

Not an insignificant number of Catholics like to claim that *The New York Time*s is anti-Catholic in its reporting and editorializing. Such claims are often accompanied by a fundraising pitch of one kind or another. I don't view the *Times* as anti-Catholic. On Wednesday, the National Day of Prayer, the *Times* had an interesting perspective on prayer.

In Wednesday's opinion section of the paper, T. M. Luhrmann, a professor of anthropology at Stanford and the author of *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship With God*, wrote an interesting essay on prayer [1] and describes how some prayerful people actually hear God with their ears speaking to them. He compares the experiences of congregants hearing God to the kinds of things people suffering from schizophrenia -- or a radical break from reality -- hear. Luhrmann rules out schizophrenia as the source of the heard statements.

Luhrmann concludes:

The more interesting lesson is what it tells us about the mind and prayer. If hearing a voice is associated with focused attention to the inner senses -- hearing with the mind's ear, seeing with the mind's eye -- it suggests that prayer (which today, the National Day of Prayer, celebrates) is a pretty powerful instrument. We often imagine prayer as a practice that affects the content of what we think about -- our moral aspirations, or our contrition. It's probably more accurate to understand prayer as a skill that changes how we use our minds.

Source URL (retrieved on *08/31/2015 - 17:13*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/voice-god-you-hear

Links:
[1] http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/02/opinion/is-that-god-talking.html?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=edit_th_20130502&_r=0