

## Prayer: a renewable energy source

Donna Schaper | Nov. 27, 2013 Eco Catholic

Theologian Karl Barth once said, "to clasp the hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world."

That sentence contains a whole theology.

Prayer is a revolution. It changes things. Prayer is a source of renewable energy. It rises up. There is disorder in the world. It is neither what God intended nor where God is going with things. Fancy Christians call that theology eschatological: the already end times, though not yet of this world. In the beginning the world was good. At the end it will return to original goodness. In the middle, we can pray -- and in praying, disrupt the disorder of the muddled middle time.

In this theology we understand composure. We understand what it means to have nightmares about the end of oil, or worse, the end of this world. We understand that our beginnings -- in created grandeur -- connect to our endings in returned grandeur. The real nature of things is beloved by prayer. The actual nature of things is disrupted. We take the air out of its balloon and put the air in our lungs and our spirits.

More than a few people are looking for a new energy. And they are not talking about fossil fuel's replacement by solar and wind, though that would be great as well. They are looking for the spiritual power to endure fear and greed and an awful sense that the wrong people and wrong values are in charge.

Prayer can be that power. Robert Frost says that a poem is a momentary stay against confusion. So is prayer. It stops the swirl and starts the peace. Simone Weil, a 20th century French philosopher, said that prayer is absolute, unmixed attention. She didn't know Karl Barth, but she seems to have shared his vision of prayer.

When we attend creation and creation's end time, we become unflappable. We remind ourselves that this world is not what the world is supposed to be. We become armed against those so disenchanting that they just sigh and say, "This is just the way things are." Or "meant to be."

We remind ourselves in the renewable energy of prayer that, indeed, "this" is not the way things are or the way they are meant to be. Creation shakes hands with destination, and we remember that powers larger than our own are in charge.

Prayer is a source of renewable energy. It doesn't build windmills; instead, it builds wind. It doesn't capture sunlight but gives us sunnier souls.

Sociologist Robert Bellah said religion is simply the imagination of another reality. We lift our eyes unto the hills. Prayer goes to the quiet corner of the party and listens, and listens deep. Prayer gets rid of the stale energy that is so oppressing our bodies and souls. Prayer is like a wheelbarrow that makes light the heavy load.

On his deathbed John Quincy Adams said, "I am composed." Why wait until then for composure? How about

composure now, as it was in the beginning and will be in the end?

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