

# Free yourself to love yourself

In response to a column I wrote earlier this year about “living in the now,” a wonderful man gave me this very insightful prayer, a prayer that he says every day.

“Dear God, I spend so much time reliving yesterday or anticipating tomorrow, that I lose sight of the only time that is really mine, the present moment. You give me today, one moment at a time. That’s all I have, all I will ever have.

“Give me the faith that knows that each moment contains exactly what is best for me. Give me the hope that trusts you enough to forget past sins and future trials. Give me the love that makes each moment an anticipation of eternity with you. I ask this in the name of Jesus who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

God gives us now. We humans invented calendars and clocks as a practical way of measuring the past and present. When we become slaves of our past or future, we miss the gift of God – the gift of the eternal now.

I’m reminded of a true story of a missionary priest on a South Seas island, who was quite upset at the natives for arriving so late for Mass. One of the elders said to the priest: “You Westerners have watches. We have time!”

The prayer honors time. First, “Faith that knows each moment of time contains exactly what is best for me.” That’s a tough one, isn’t it? Most of us could point to a myriad of things right now that don’t seem to be “best.” As someone wisely said, “Most of us like to talk to God, but we prefer to be in an advisory position.”

No, I can’t explain the problem of evil. My little book, “When Life Doesn’t Make Sense,” attempts to do that, but I know how inadequate words can be.

Instead of getting angry at God, suppose we try accepting each moment as the best possible moment. Suppose we tried trusting God, instead of challenging God. Would a God who taught us to call him “Abba, Daddy,” not really have our best intentions at heart?

The second part of the prayer sent to me reads “Hope that trusts you enough to

forget past sins and future trials.” Having been burdened with scrupulosity myself, and having spent countless hours as a priest helping others to heal their own scrupulosity, it might seem quite a stretch to forget past sins.

Yet Jesus didn’t come to condemn us but to save us. He was upset at the Pharisees, who laid heavy burdens on other people’s backs. He promised that he came that we might have life, and life to the full. Does living with guilt about the past and fear of the future sound like something Jesus wants for us? Why not give those memories, those pictures, those ideas to God, and allow him to dissolve them for us?

Finally, there is love. Ultimately there is only love. For many of us Catholics, it seems that we remembered to love everyone but ourselves. I’m not talking about narcissistic preoccupation with ourselves. I’m talking about loving ourselves that we might have more energy, peace and joy to love others fully.

Our minds are not our friends. They often treat us like slaves. Our minds constantly find something to berate us for, or berate others for. Jesus, however, said that he didn’t call us slaves, but friends. To live in the now is to trust in the friendship and love and care of God. Living in the past or future rarely brings us peace. But God does bring us peace in the now.