



C·S· LEWIS INSTITUTE

Reflections

October 2016 – *UNVEILING OURSELVES IN PRAYER*

In *Letters to Malcolm*, C.S. Lewis explores a number of issues related to prayer, including “What should we pray for?” In Letter IV, he writes:

We are always completely, and therefore equally, known to God. That is our destiny whether we like it or not. But though this knowledge never varies, the quality of our being known can... Ordinarily, to be known by God is to be, for this purpose, in the category of things. We are like earthworms, cabbages, and nebulae, objects of divine knowledge. But when we (a) become aware of the fact—the present fact, not the generalisation—and (b) assent with all our will to be so known, then we treat ourselves, in relation to God, not as things but as persons. We have unveiled. Not that any veil could have baffled this sight. The change is in us. The passive changes to the active. Instead of merely being known, we show, we tell, we offer ourselves to view.



To put ourselves thus on a personal footing with God could, in itself and without warrant, be nothing but presumption and illusion. But we are taught that it is not; that it is God who gives us that footing. For it is by the Holy Spirit that we cry “Father.” By unveiling, by confessing our sins and “making known” our requests, we assume the high rank of persons before Him. And He, descending, becomes a Person to us...

Meantime ... we want to know not how we should pray if we were perfect but how we should pray being as we now are. And if my idea of prayer as “unveiling” is accepted, we have already answered this. It is no use to ask God with factitious earnestness for A when our whole mind is in reality filled with the desire for B. We must lay before Him what is in us, not what ought to be in us.

Even an intimate human friend is ill-used if we talk to him about one thing while our mind is really on another, and even a human friend will soon become aware when we are doing so...

And perhaps, as those who do not turn to God in petty trials will have no *habit* or such resort to help them when the great trials come, so those who have not learned to ask Him for childish things will have less readiness to ask Him for great ones. We must not be too high-minded. I fancy we may sometimes be deterred from small prayers by a sense of our own dignity rather than of God's.¹

As you pray to God, do you unveil yourself to Him as you really are, sharing your deepest thoughts, concerns, questions and doubts? How wonderful it is that God knows us as persons, and invites us to pray to Him as Father.

*“And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God,
and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”*

JOHN 17:3 (ESV)

¹ C.S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964), pp. 20-23.