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Finding candor in prayer

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The news events of the last week and a half rush by in noisy current. There is the jabber of the politicians -- some of it important -- sex and the generals, the looming fiscal cliff, and now the dreadful bombardment of Gaza. I have followed these stories and more with varying attention, sometimes composing commentaries in my head about their outlandish doings.

But Friday morning, I thought of a more subtle astonishment -- a prayer I discovered in "A Circuitous Journey," the slim memoir of Br. James Curran, founder of the Little Brothers of St. Francis. The small contemplative community lives a radical poverty in one of Boston's poorest neighborhoods, offering a ministry of presence to the city's homeless. Their rigorous charism has attracted many men over the years, but few have stayed. During the community's darker moments, Curran would pray this prayer, which has been credited to Therese of Lisieux.

Prayer of Marie Noel

My God, I do not love you, I do not even desire it. I am weary of you. Perhaps I do not believe in you. But look on me in passing. Hide yourself for a moment in my soul, put it in order by a breath, without my knowing it, without saying a word of it to me. If you want me to believe in you, give me faith. If you want me to love you, give me love. I do not have any and I can do nothing for it. I give you what I have: my weakness, my sorrow, and that tenderness which torments and that you see so well, and that despair, and that crazy shame, my pain, nothing but my pain, and my hope! It is everything" (From *My Vocation is Love* by Jean LaFrance).

There have been many times in my life when a beautiful scene, song or exquisitely truthful poem cuts through the buzz of the moment and startles me into a new perspective. This prayer did that for me. I love its candor, its attitude of desire and trust, which, like a lovers' exchange, words only partially express.

Amid the noise of the day, the whispered giving of oneself to a God who accepts all and holds back nothing.

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