

# **PRAYER EXERCISE**

## **Docility to God's Will**

### **The Old Battered Violin**

*This prayer Exercise is based on the poem of Myra Brooks Welch: "At the Auction Sale"*

#### **Intent of this Prayer Exercise**

- ✓ To encourage the participants to be pliable and docile to God's inspirations, promptings and inner workings.
- ✓ To be aware that God, if we allow him to use us as he pleases, will change our lives for the better
- ✓ To discover the blocks we put to God working in us preventing Him from doing through us the wonderful things he would like to accomplished.

#### **Uses of these Notes:**

- ✓ Prayer services.
- ✓ You may use the ideas of this exercise for talks and sermons.
- ✓ Personal prayer and reflection.
- ✓ Recollections.

#### **Target Audiences:**

- ✓ All audiences.
- ✓ Specially youth.

#### **Requirements:**

Copies of the poem "At the Auction Sale" for all

## **1 Introduction**

- ✓ Quiet down. Some relaxation exercises, soft music and/or breathing exercises may help.
- ✓ Opening Prayer.
- ✓ Singing hymns or bhajans.

## **2 Private Work**

### **Reading and Reflecting on the Poem**

- ✓ Give copies of the poem; to all the participants.
- ✓ Ask them to read it carefully, reflect on it and get its message.

## **“At the Auction Sale”**

`It was a battered and scarred violin.  
The auctioneer brought it out,  
It was scarcely worth his while

He held it up and with a smile  
He cried: “Good folks, who will start the bidding for me?”  
"A dollar, a dollar" Then, “Two!”  
Only two? Who will make it three?  
"Three dollars, once: three dollars, twice; going for three"

But no! from the room, far back, a gray-haired  
man came forward and picked up the bow;  
Then, wiping the dust from the old violin,  
And tightening the loose strings,  
He played a melody so pure and sweet,  
as caroling angels would sing.

The music ceased, and the auctioneer,  
With a voice that was quiet and low, said:  
"What am I to bid for the old violin?"  
And he held it up with the bow.  
"A thousand dollars, and who'll make it two?  
Two thousand! And who'll make it three?  
Three thousand once, Three thousand, twice  
And going, and gone," “Three thousand gone!” .

The people cheered, but some one exclaimed:  
"I do not quite understand. What changed its worth so quickly?"  
Swift came the reply: `The touch of a master's hand".

### **3 Group Reflection and Sharing Note to the Moderator:**

- ✓ By putting questions to the participants, elicit their replies and trigger a good participatory discussion.
- ✓ Comment on their replies.
- ✓ Frame your own questions. (*To help you in case you need some handy questions, we suggest the following*)
  1. In the story, what does the violin stand for? (*Any one of us*)
  2. And the auction sale? (*The world, human society*)
  3. And the unknown master violin player? (*God - Jesus*)
  4. And the sudden increase in value? (*The discovering of our worth and hidden qualities, Personal improvement, change for the better, good deeds, holy life*)
  5. Why such sudden change? (*The touch of a master's hand*)

6. What's the message of the story? (*We are like old, battered violins. **If we allow God to touch us and work in us we shall produce sweet music;** in other words, God will help us to discover our worth and enable us to use all the talents we have to do good works*)
7. Are there any other lessons and applications you can draw from the story for our lives
8. What's your worth? Can you improve it? How to discover it?

#### **4 Mini-Input**

If you feel, you may give the participants a short input

*Suggested ideas are:*

- We Are God's Instruments.
- Only God knows our true worth. A true violinist knows the worth of each violin.
- There is a lot of good hidden within us which is known only to God.
- He can and wants to bring to fruition all the good talents hidden within us.
- A good musician like God can easily bring out those latent treasures unknown to us.
- For that we must not put blocks to Him, but allow Him to use us as he pleases.
- We are not dead, inert instruments like the violin.
- We are living beings endowed with free will.
- We can block and hinder God's plans for us.
- God will not use force on us!
- Like our Lady, we have to tell God: "Let it be done unto me according to your word"
- God, unceasingly, is inviting us, begging of us to allow him to use us!
- He keeps sending us signals such as inspirations, promptings, graces, "inner touches".
- We have to be attuned to them. We have always to say "Yes" to God..
- To be able to be receptive to God's touches and inspirations, we have to be detached from earthly things and open to Him in prayer
- From time to time we have reflect and see how open and available we are to God's invitations and touches.
- It is only by opening ourselves to God that we shall become living instruments with which he will play beautiful music as he did with Our Lady, St. Joseph, St. Paul, St. Francis of Assisi, the Little Flower and innumerable saints!

#### **5 Shared Group Prayer.**

Lead the participants through a shared prayer session.

We suggest the following items for this prayer session:

- Hymns, bhajans.
- Spontaneous, prayers.
- Petitionary prayers.
- Praying for one another.
- Reading, commenting and praying with some N.T. Texts.
- The texts suggested will help you bring out the idea that Christ is a Master Violinist. His master touch changed seemingly, good-for-nothing sinners into glorious saints.

- Mary Magdalene Lk 7:36-50
- Zacchaeus Lk 19: 1-10
- The Good Thief Lk 23: 39-43
- The Adulterous Woman Jn. 8: 1-11
- The Samaritan Woman Jn. 4: 5-30
- St Paul Acts 9:1-18

## **5 Personal Checkup and Private Prayer**

*Distribute copies of the following examination of conscience:*

### **An Examination of Conscience: Personal Checkup.**

In all sincerity and honesty ask yourself before God the following questions and give him your answers:

1. Do I allow God to touch me and play the music he likes to play with me?
2. Do I listen to God's inspirations and "inner" voices?
3. Do I place any obstacles between God and me? Which? How? What shall I do about it?
4. Am I too worldly and attached to people, possessions or to my own selfish interests?
5. What is God asking me here and now? What is my answer to him?

## **6 Final Prayer.**

Close the prayer service by praying for one another and for the whole group.