

Prayer for the day

In the 12th Century a Cistercian Monk, Gilbert of Hoyland, became the Abbott of Swineshead Monastery in Lincolnshire. He came to his post almost reluctantly, realising that the call to be Abbott would place such cares on him as to reduce his own freedom to journey with God. His role would be to facilitate others and to guard their opportunities to develop their own relationships with the Lord. His feelings were expressed in a series of sermons on the Song of Songs, an amazing allegorical poem about the love between a bride and bridegroom.

In his sermons Gilbert describes the bride as the soul searching for God, just as he had searched. But as he wrote he acknowledged that his role had changed from that of the searching soul to that of the guardians of the city, those potential guides to the bride who later became her antagonists. His was the responsibility to shoulder the burdens of day to day administration, to manage the business of the house and to ensure that the monastic day was observed throughout the hours. He described the loneliness, fatigue and unsatisfied spiritual hunger caused by meeting his responsibilities with diligence and care.

His prayer expresses that longing for God

Move our hearts with the calm, smooth flow of your grace. Let the river of your love run through our souls. May my soul be carried by the current of your love, towards the wide, infinite ocean of heaven.

Stretch out my heart with your strength, as you stretch out the sky above the earth. Smooth out any wrinkles of hatred or resentment. Enlarge my soul that it may know more fully your truth.

May we see in his prayer all that the busyness of life conceals from us – the strength of God stretching us to reach our full potential of love.

Amen