

Prayer of the Month, March 2014 • St Nicholas of Flüe

My Lord and my God,
remove far from me
whatever keeps me from you.

My Lord and my God,
confer upon me
whatever enables me to reach you.

My Lord and my God,
free me from self
and make me wholly yours.



St Nicholas of Flüe, 1417–1487

There is a distance between us and God, but not only a distance, an obstacle. What this obstacle is varies from one person to another. We could call it sin or selfishness, but perhaps we do not need to be so specific. Whatever it is we can pray that God will remove it. This is the beginning of a change, a movement from ourselves towards God. The next stage is to ask for God's help to travel this journey. And then lastly to pray to be free of all human constraints as we reach the culmination and end of our journey in the intimate presence of God himself.

Nicholas of Flüe was born in 1417 in the canton of Unterwalden, Switzerland. The son of wealthy peasants, he distinguished himself as a soldier, and also continued as a farmer, marrying a farmer's daughter, Dorothy Wiss, at around the age of 30. He reportedly fought with a sword in one hand and a rosary in the other. Reflecting on a vision he received of a lily being eaten by a horse (the lily, a symbol of purity, and the horse, pulling a plough, a symbol of earthly toil), he recognised that the cares of earthly life were swallowing up his spiritual life. He decided to devote himself to the contemplative life, and so, leaving his wife and ten children, with Dorothy's consent, he lived the life of a hermit. According to legend he survived for nineteen years with no food other than the Eucharist. He acquired a reputation for wisdom and piety, and people from across Europe came to seek his advice. He is held in high esteem for being instrumental in averting war in Switzerland through his advice. When he died, on 21 March 1487, he was surrounded by his wife and children. He was canonised in 1947 by Pope Pius XII, with a designated feast day of 21 March, except in Switzerland and Germany where it is 25 September.

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