

Familiar author serves up classic spirituality

Yielding: Prayers for Those in Need of Hope, by William J. O'Malley, SJ; Ligouri Publications, 1992; 175 pages; \$6.95.

Father John J. Philipps
Guest contributor

Father William J. O'Malley needs little introduction in the Rochester diocese. For more than 10 years he taught English at McQuaid Jesuit High School, produced and directed numerous hit plays, acted, lectured, wrote and often assisted on weekends at various parishes.

Now a teacher at Fordham Preparatory School, Father O'Malley continues to turn out books and articles, his byline frequently appearing in *America* and

other widely read publications.

While his recent work, *Yielding: Prayers for Those in Need of Hope*, might appear to be a book of prayers, it is as much a book about prayer.

In his preface, the author deals with the problem of pain and suffering, concluding that "often what we call praying is anything but; it is trying to change God's plan rather than trying to come to peace with God's plans."

This theme, then, is dominant in his 30 days of prayers for morning, daytime, and evening: "I pray not to change your mind, only to understand it, to yield to it." "Yielding" defines real prayer, according to Father O'Malley.

Excerpts from more than 50 novelists, poets, playwrights, essayists and theologians from various periods and backgrounds are interspersed in each day's prayer. (In fact, the Jesuit might have subtitled his work "How an English teacher prays.")

And the priest was wise to state in his preface that his scriptural selections, which are abundant and well-chosen, are not translations, but merely thoughts "suggested by" a particular biblical passage. That kind note may spare the Scripture scholar, the linguistic purist, from going into cardiac arrest, when he or she finds such an entry as: "Let all who have God's deathless soul sing

praise!/? Pope and prince, president, pasha, peer/ Faust and housewife, life-guard, barkeep, sweep, /squatter, vagrant, sot and serf - praise God!" identified as Psalm 148.

Other suggested biblical thoughts are salted with delightful anachronisms, giving the verses a striking relevance. Yet the reader, the pray-er, does not get the feeling that O'Malley is trying to be cute. Instead, the reader senses the spiritual depth of a very gifted writer. *Yielding* is classic spirituality expressed in classic O'Malley.

Father Philipps is pastor of St. Bridget/St. Joseph Church in East Bloomfield.

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