

Phase 7: Round and round

In the summer season, a honeybee lives for only 6 weeks.

Yet it carries out all these tasks faithfully. Having contributed so much to the life of the hive, tired and 'elderly', it will die in or near it. Life will go on. The bees will remove the dead ones from the hive and the colony will go on being replenished. The cycle will begin again.

Consider

One day your life will come to an end. It may be soon. It may be later. What do you wish to do in the time that is left to you? Does God have some particular task for you?

Pray

Thank you, Lord, for your loving kindness to me, and for the inspiration that comes from the bees. As I continue to grow in faith, help me to remain in your love, to be ready to embrace change and to move on. And if the time is coming for me to hang up my wings, help me to do so gracefully, and to trust my end to you.

Amen.

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BEESWAX AND BLESSING



A meditation based on the life and work of the honeybee

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Reflect on the fact that a working honeybee lives for about 6 weeks. It will fly about 500 miles and produce half a teaspoonful of honey, as well as helping to build and maintain the honeycomb. This meditation links the life cycle of the honeybee with our own life in the world.

Phase 1: New Life

A bee begins life as an egg - laid by the Queen bee in the bottom of a cell of a honeycomb made by the bees. It hatches into a larva, which is fed by them. At a certain stage the bees cover the top of the cell with wax. The larva continues to develop and eventually the fully formed bee with wings is born by biting its way out of the cell. It emerges into a crowd of busy bees milling about. Some will feed it.

Consider

Bees are known for being busy! This might be something you identify with. Perhaps you have been a newcomer in some situation. How did you feel? Are there newcomers in any place where you find yourself today?

Pray

Lord, give me a spirit of welcome and outreach to the stranger you put beside me, and help me not to be so busy that I miss the signs of new life.

Amen.

Phase 6: Sticky stuff!

Some of the nectar is absorbed into the bee's body, which begins to produce wax. This is secreted from wax glands onto the underside of its body. With this, bees build the honeycomb and repair it when damaged. They also collect resin (propolis) from trees, which they process into glue to seal gaps in the hive and make it watertight.

Consider

Damaged lives and human situations also need healing, renewal and protection.

Pray

Lord, use me as a channel of your peace, to bring love... pardon ... faith... hope... light... joy... and healing.

Amen.

Phase 5: The sweetness of honey

Bees produce honey to feed on through the winter.

In the second half of their life they collect nectar from flowers and bring it back to the hive where other bees process it, add it to the cells and evaporate it to the consistency of honey by fanning their wings.

Consider

See how bees practise division of labour! St Paul reminds us that we are 'Many members, one body', each with a specific gift and calling, and each a needful part of the whole.

Pray

Help me, Lord, to be aware that you have given to me particular talents and gifts, even in infirmity. May I not be afraid to let you use me where you need me, and wherever I am.

Amen

Phase 2: Into work

The newborn bee's glands are not working and it cannot sting. When its glands become activated and its body hardened and in full working order, for the first 20 days of its life, during the course of each day, a bee does a number of different jobs, loosely progressing through different tasks according to age.

Consider

Half of the bees in a hive have 'domestic' duties. The first work a bee does is to clean out and polish the cells from which baby bees have emerged. In the Gospel, Jesus encourages us to be faithful in little things, to do our tasks really well. We are never too old - or too young - to make a useful contribution to the work of the Kingdom of God.

Pray

Help me, Lord, to see you in all things, and to do everything for you.

Amen.

Phase 3: Food, glorious food!

Without the pollinating activity of the bee, we would have no food. Bees also have to gather and eat an enormous amount of pollen, which helps their bodies to make 'bee milk'. With this milk they nurture the bees that are developing in the cells but are still larvae, with special care being given to those larvae that are to develop into Queens.

Consider

Bees feed themselves and then nurture one another. Jesus fed the multitudes. He fed his disciples in the Eucharist. And he prayed for those who, through them would believe his message.

Pray

Lord, I thank you for the nourishment I receive from you in word and sacrament and through the ministrations of others. Help me to share my bread and wine.

Amen.

Phase 4: Under attack!

The beekeeper has to open up the hive occasionally, to check on progress. It has to be done very carefully, as it can be traumatic for the bees. Some bees have the task of guarding the entrance against predators such as birds, mice or robbing wasps.

Consider

We do not always treat God's world with respect. We are careless in our use of resources and greedy in our use of raw materials. What are the predators in our *Christian life*?

Pray

Give me a greater care for all your creatures and a love for all that you have given us in this beautiful world. As I live in an increasingly secular society, make me strong in protecting Christian life and standards.

Amen.