

Pray With Childlike Praise

Deacon Dan's homily for Sunday, October 20, 2019

The point of the story Jesus tells us about the widow and the dishonest judge, if you missed it, comes in the first line, “the necessity for them, for us, to pray always without becoming weary.”

Today's lesson from Jesus is about prayer; specifically, persistence in our prayer, but prayer. Now, maybe you find prayer boring or irrelevant in a modern high-tech society, or prayer is something old people do. But, if you're thinking, “Oh God, I hope he doesn't talk too long today; then, you're already praying!”

For years I thought prayer was pretty much limited to Mass on Sunday and Holy Days, grace before meals and a 20-second prayer at bedtime...that didn't vary at all night after night. Really, my prayer seemed not much more than a memorized recital of words that my Mom and Dad...and the Sisters of Mercy taught me as a youngster; the intimacy of a relationship was missing.

As I grew older and faced trials with our children, troubles at work, feelings of uncertainty about things that I saw happening in the world, I would turn to God and ask for His help. Occasionally, I would see something wonderful while on a backpacking trip, or see the miraculous treasures of life in our children, or feel the grace of love from my wife, and thank and praise God for giving me these beautiful gifts. But, I can't say that these times of prayer were more than brief opportunities to encounter our good and gracious Lord; brief because I wouldn't give Him time, I wasn't centering myself on Him. God was always in my life, but on the periphery, the outskirts. And, God wants

more than that for us. He wants all of us. He calls us to be in relationship with Him through prayer.

St. Paul says, “Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Terri and I have been married for nearly 46 years. We dated for a year before that. During our courtship, we couldn't wait to see each other; We couldn't wait to talk together and share everything about our lives. We would leave notes for each other on our cars if the other was at work. We got to know each other by talking, sharing, and listening...listening. Throughout our marriage, when things would get a bit dicey, it was the conversation, the sharing, and the listening that was being neglected.

Our relationships with each other, when built on love, are patterned after our relationship with Jesus. Converse/pray, share, listen.

Prayer is important for our spiritual life, our spiritual growth, our knowing Jesus. We know that the Gospels record Jesus praying, but just in the Gospel we heard from today, St. Luke references Jesus praying 18 times!

4:21. After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also was baptized and was praying, heaven was opened.

5:16. The report about him spread all the more, and great crowds assembled to listen to him and to be cured of their ailments, but he would withdraw to deserted places to pray.

Before he selected the 12 apostles, 6:12 In those days he departed to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God.

9:16. Then, taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing over them, broke them and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd.

6:28. While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white.

11:1. He was praying in a certain place, and when he had finished one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples.'

22:17. Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and said Take this and share it among yourselves.

Terri recently purchased a little book for our grandson, Zachary, who was baptized last Sunday. He's seven years old. The name of the book is, "Notes from Jesus: What your new best friend wants you to know" by Mikal Keefer. Here's a little bit from one page on prayer.

"I want you to know...I don't care if you pray with your eyes wide open...

Or while you're riding a bike.

Or while you're cleaning your room.

Or while you're eating a sandwich.

Or while you're watching TV.

Or while you're in class, in church, or in the bathtub.

Or while you're pulling on your sneakers, brushing your teeth, doing homework, yawning yourself awake, or drifting off to sleep.

It's okay with me if you pray while you're weeding the garden, jumping off the high dive, mowing the grass, getting a haircut, walking the dog,

making your bed, riding in the car, hopscotching across the playground, or climbing a tree.

You can pray anywhere, anytime, and I'm happy to talk with you. The more we're together, the better I like it!"

Zachary received another book; It's titled, "If I could ask God anything" by Katheryn Slattery. So, I looked through it and found a question that just might help us.

"What should I do when I can't think of what to pray?"

It suggests using mnemonic ACTS – like the Acts of the Apostles, St. Luke's second important writing. ACTS stands for Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. I know what you might be thinking...You gave this to your grandson...he's only seven! Well, we have high hopes for him.

ADORATION – Start your prayer time by praising God. Tell God how wonderful He is. Tell God how much you appreciate His love and His creation.

CONFESSION – Confess to God all the ways you've let Him down. Tell God you are sorry for your sins. Ask for His forgiveness.

THANKSGIVING - Thank God for all the good things in your life. Once you get started, this may take longer than you think! No matter what your troubles are, there is always much to be thankful for.

SUPPLICATION – The word supplication means to humbly and earnestly ask. Tell God what's going on in your life. Share your prayer requests. Don't hold back. Tell God everything, from the bottom of your heart. God loves you, and He wants to hear every detail.

Now, I know I've read to you from two children's books. But there are lessons from the simplicity of children's prayer.

St. Matthew wrote, "When the chief priests and the scribes saw the wondrous things* he was doing, and the children crying out in the temple area, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant and said to him, "Do you hear what they are saying?" Jesus said to them, "Yes; and have you never read the text, 'Out of the mouths of infants and nurslings you have brought forth praise'?"

Today, let us go forth and grow in relationship with God through His beloved Son with childlike prayer.