

THEME: PERSVERE IN PRAYER

Objective: That God's will be done.

The Bible is urging us to pray always, to praise and thank God in all states and situations of life (1 Thes 5:17-18). But what is prayer exactly? When should we pray? How and why should we pray?

Today's readings give us the answers to these questions. Prayer is a relationship -- an intimate, loving, caring, parent-child relationship. Prayer is the uplifting of one's soul to God, directly, as Abraham did, or indirectly through the saints, to praise, thank or petition Him for blessings.

In prayer we acknowledge God as our Father, Savior and Director and so, we converse with Him with full trust. Since God is omnipotent, all-knowing, and so-loving that He gave us His only Son to die for us and adopted us as His children through baptism, we can confidently surrender to Him ourselves and all our worries and anxieties.

The first reading taken from the book of Genesis (18:20-32) gives us a model of intercessory prayer provided by Abraham in his dialogue with God. God reveals His readiness to save the innocent in the sinful towns of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The responsorial psalm (138) "*Lord, on the day I called for help, you answered me,*" testifies that God answers our prayers. The second reading taken from the Letter to the Colossians (2: 12-14) gives us the basis of our confidence that God answers our prayers. If God sacrificed His own Son to liberate us from our sins, why shouldn't He answer our prayers?

The problem is that sometimes we ask for things whose consequences we do not know. In that case, God as a good parent, who knows everything, including the future, responds by doing what will be more beneficial to us. For example, if you pray for the healing of your sick child and God, the omniscient sees that if that child survives he is going to become a rascal and a burden to you and ruin his soul, He may decide simply to take your child to heaven. That way, God has answered your prayer by saving you and your child.

Hence, in the gospel passage (Lk 11:1-13), Jesus teaches us the model prayer, in which we acknowledge God as **OUR** Father, surrender to His will and wise leadership as our King, and ask Him to provide us with material and spiritual food, the word of God and Holy Communion, to forgive us as we forgive others and to protect us from temptations and final damnation.

The conviction that we are praying to our Father motivates us to pray even with persistence and perseverance as Abraham did and as the friend in need in the parable did. Jesus assures us that God will not be irritated by our requests, but will grant our requests. Saint Monica, the mother of Saint Augustine, prayed for thirty years before Augustine was converted from his waywardness.

Why does God seem to take such a long time, in such cases, before answering the prayers? First of all, there is no time in God. He sees everything in the present. So, it is false to say that God has delayed in answering our prayers. But we, who are time limited, take a long time to understand and accept God's will for us. Prayer does not change God. It changes me to finally hear God.

Bishop Sheen has this comment on prayer: "The man who thinks only of himself says prayers of petition. He who thinks of his neighbor says prayers of intercession. He who thinks only of loving and serving God says prayers of abandonment to God's will, and that is the prayer of the saints."

In any case, prayer is essential for our lives. For example, to remain faithful in marriage, the spouses must pray, not only individually, but also together. The Our Father, teaches us that our faith in God is not a private affair. It is communal. That is why we celebrate Mass together as brothers and sisters in God our Father. "A family that prays together, stays together" (Fulton Sheen). They must thank God and offer intercessory prayers for each other and for others.

Here is St. John Marie Vianney's advice to a couple: "Spend three minutes praising and thanking God for all you have. Spend three minutes asking God's pardon for your sins and presenting your needs before Him. Spend three minutes reading the Bible and listening to God in silence. And do this every day."

Prayer is priority number one in our daily 24 hours, because we depend on God and we are on earth to prepare for heaven. If prayer were not necessary, Jesus would not have prayed and he would not have taught his disciples how to pray.

If we learn to talk to God and to listen to Him by reading the Bible, prayer will not be boring, but enjoyable. So, let us **PERSVERE IN PRAYER, especially Holy Mass, which is the most effective prayer.**