

WOULD YOU LIKE TO LEARN HOW TO PRAY AS AN ADULT?

When I was a lad growing up part of the ritual before dinner was hearing my mother call out to her children (especially the three boys) to wash our hands. How did she know that our hands were dirty? But it was all part of the ritual and part of getting ready to sit at table properly disposed. Stay clean. It was similar in first century Israel at the time of Jesus but there it was required of all, including adults and there were very few exceptions. The external cleanliness was to be a sign of internal purity. It wasn't always such a sign but it was much more clearly observable than inner impurity.

I am reminded of this from the first reading today and from the headlines of the last several weeks where we are confronted once again with the impurity and of predator priests and bishops and of the hush hush cover-ups to prevent word about the impure behavior getting out. There's a word we sometimes use when we uncover something that is disgusting, sleazy, degrading or reprehensible. The word is: Skeevy. A lot of what has been written lately about some priests and a growing number of bishops, archbishops and Cardinals, and even our holy father himself, Pope Francis, sounds skeevy or at best very shady behavior. I don't know who did what and who knew what when. There was some bad stuff going on and we are now faced with finally bringing this sordid side of Church life into the purifying light of day. These sins may not be our sins but make no mistake these are bad sins and we who remain don't deserve any of this but we have to deal with all of this.

We shouldn't have to pay for those sleazy sins and shady dealings of those who portrayed themselves as pure and true. And Jesus certainly should not have had to make up for our sins and acts of selfishness but pay the price for it He did. And it was ordinary human beings like us who called for his death. But we most definitely will have to make up for the disgusting things that went on and were kept quiet so as to save the reputation of the church or certain high-ranking people's reputation. What about the kids and young people? What about what was happening to them?

It is at least ironic that today's readings touch on these very issues. What Moses addresses with the people of Israel is the simple question: How shall we live in this world? God knows we need guidance on this. God provides it. The Ten Commandments capture the basic minimum if we are to live in harmony and order. Moses knows his people though and so he adds: Hear the statues and decrees. Listen. Listen to them. Listen for them. He reminds them that these commandments come directly from God.

They do not need to be improved upon. “You shall not add to what I command you or subtract from it.” Period.

Psalm 15 teaches us: Walk blamelessly. Do justice. Slander no one. Do none harm. Do not reproach. Accept no bribe. In the second reading we are counselled to welcome God’s word as it comes to us. As is. Period. And the gospel, from the lips of Jesus himself we hear some of the things He knows we are tempted to do: Evil thoughts, unchastity, licentiousness, adultery, blasphemy, arrogance. It all sounds very familiar. These things happened at the time of Jesus and they happen now too—even in the Church where none of this should ever have a place.

What can we do? How can we cope? How can we help lives be restored? How can the Church’s wounds be healed? The presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit are the two sources available to fix this mess. And how do we access this presence and this power? Only through our prayer. We have to renew our efforts to pray for an end of the lurid evil, to pray for a new beginning—in truth, to pray that the souls so scorched by lust will be restored and lives returned by the light of Jesus Christ shining into the depths of the darkness in the Church. . We have to pray that the Church we love undergoes its necessary purification.

I know that we who are here today know how to pray. But sometimes we begin to think that maybe our prayer isn’t up to the task or that maybe we don’t know how to pray as effectively as we should. Knowing all of this, in October we are beginning an eight week series entitled **Meeting Christ in Prayer**. Precisely because so much is happening around us we will be gathering in small groups to learn how to pray better, to pray as adults pray, to learn how to develop habits of prayer, how to take a passage from Scripture and reflect on it in terms of our own life or that of our family or these dark situations of sin, how to enter more deeply into the mystery that this life is, how to transform our prayer into a healing force in the Church.

You will hear more about Meeting Christ in Prayer but don’t wait til then. The Archdiocese is hosting a Night of Reparation on Friday evening September 14th at the Cathedral from 5PM until Midnight. All are invited to come for all or part of that evening of prayer and reparation. I will ask our Pastoral Council this week what steps we as a parish should be taking to address this critical juncture in the life of our Church. More will follow. But for now we all need to step up the amount and the intensity of our prayer. The Lord’s Body, in its many members, has been deeply wounded again. It is our turn to pray for its healing—our healing.