

## **HAVE YOU STOPPED PRAYING?**

(There are moments when we allow prayer to slip from our lives.  
It can be rekindled again.)

Sometimes when I go on my annual retreat which is a time set aside for prayer and reflection as well as being a time of rest and a time to get out from under the daily burdens of life, I rekindle my efforts at prayer. There was one particular year while on retreat I watched the movie, *The Passion of the Christ* and used that for purposes of meditation, prayer and reflection all focused on the last twelve hours of Jesus' life. I had seen the film with our parish Bible Study group but this time I simply viewed it by myself.

Many things struck me once again. One of them was that the words of Jesus: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do," are portrayed as having been spoken by Jesus more than once. In one scene a member of the Sanhedrin draws close to the cross of Christ. He challenges Jesus to come down from the cross and then states that if Jesus does so then everyone will believe in him. The man reminds Jesus that Jesus himself made the claim that if the Temple were destroyed that he (Jesus) could rebuild it in three days. As the man begins to walk away Jesus says, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." At that point, the good thief calls after the member of the Sanhedrin and says, "Listen, he's praying for you." The man walking away halts for a moment, cocks his head, and then continues walking.

"Listen. He's praying for you." Yes. He is. Even in his own intense and unjust pain, Jesus prays for the one whose heart is hardened against him. And so I found myself asking whether my prayer is like that. I will say this. If I cannot even imagine myself praying like that then I never will be able to pray like that. But if I can at least imagine the possibility of a prayer like that then I can begin to desire that and want that and actually begin to pray that way.

My experience is that all people want their prayer to be better than it is. Jesus tells us a story today about how important it is to keep on praying and not allowing ourselves to lose heart. There are some here today in this church who have stopped praying. Oh, you are here at Mass but I mean you have stopped praying in your own heart. Jesus bids us to persevere and persist in our praying. If we have to start over, then let's start over. Our prayer doesn't change God. Our prayer doesn't force God to do something that is not part of the divine design. Our prayer changes us, our hearts. Praying keeps us in harmony with the mind and heart of God.

There are little things that we can do to re-invigorate our lives of prayer and make prayer more a part of our daily lives. There are little things that we can say:

- 1) "Thank you, Jesus." Who is not able to say those simple words? For narrow escapes—thank you Jesus. When good things happen—thank you Jesus. When the lost find their way again—thank you, Jesus. When catastrophe is avoided—thank you, Jesus. When we get good test results—thank you Jesus. When our raise comes through—thank you Jesus. When we get that job—thank you Jesus.

- 2) “God is good.” This day, when you are driving anywhere and see the beautiful fall foliage all around you—God is good. When you see signs of God’s providential care—God is good. When operations or therapies go well—God is good. When you have a roof over your head and a bed in which to sleep—God is good. Who is not able to say those simple words of praise and prayer?
- 3) “I’m sorry, Lord.” When we say or do something that hurts or cuts another—I’m sorry Lord. When we have little gratitude in our hearts for the blessings of life—I’m sorry, Lord. When we leave God out of the picture or out of our plans—I’m sorry, Lord. When we have been less than we know we should be—I’m sorry, Lord.
- 4) “Help me Lord.” When temptation arises and we are weak—help me, Lord. When we try to go it alone and fail—help me Lord. When we lose our way in life—help me Lord. Who of us is not able to pray this and these other simple prayers? But as we do we find that the whole day begins to be full of little moments of prayer—and we are praying again, and from our hearts, from that which is real.
- 5)

Let me ask you, how do you end your day? Watching TV? Talking on the phone? Reading? Washing up? After you turn off the light and slide your feet under the covers, stop. Thank the Lord for the day, for the Lord’s being with you. If there are reasons for it, ask the Lord’s forgiveness. If you need to ask for deeper faith or more help, then ask. But do this one small and simple thing. Tell the Lord that you love him. “I love you, Lord.” I don’t know of any person who ever tires of hearing someone say to them “I love you.” God is no exception. “I love you, Lord.” Who cannot do that? Who cannot say that? Who is incapable of uttering such simple words? Give the Lord the end of your day. Pray always—all throughout the day. Pray always. “Thank you, Jesus. God is good. Help me, Lord. I’m sorry Lord. I love you, Lord.” And, don’t lose heart!