

072510 Intercessory Prayer

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Once again, I am so glad and honored to be with you Boy Scouts... and with your leaders and staff members. This is the last Sunday liturgy -- the last Communion Service for the summer. I've done about 3 or 4 of these and each has been a blessing. I enjoy working with young people.

And speaking of working with young people, my wife and I just came back from Denver where we helped at the wonderful Steubenville of the Rockies Youth Conference. Each summer, there are about a dozen of these events around the country. The one in Denver that I helped with had 1,850 young teens and they came from about eight states to attend this. The young people heard good youth speakers... good praise and worship music... there were confessions (and 1,350 young people went to confession... it was so awesome to see this)... and there were two Masses led by the Denver bishops. There was lots of time for adoration -- that means prayer before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament... and to see 100's of young people praying like that in silence was so uplifting. In a few years -- if any of you get a chance to go to one of the Steubenville events -- please prayerfully consider going.

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Now speaking of prayer... our readings today had to do with praying for others... it's called Intercessory Prayer... Jesus said: "And I tell you – ask and you will receive. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds... and the one who knocks, the door will be opened." So Jesus tells us to ask... to intercede for our needs and for the needs of others. The answers from God are Yes, No and Not Now... If God says NO to our requests -- we ought to treat it as an answer for our good or for God's other plans.

Today in that reading we hear Abraham interceding for others before God... Lord, if there are 30 good men, Lord will you preserve the town for the sake of the 30? And God said he would hold back His anger. And Abraham continued interceding until they were down to 10... Lord, if there be 10 good men, then Lord... then will You not destroy the town? The answer was yes.

We know that Moses was a great leader and he loved the Jewish people and he continually turned to the Lord and interceded for his people. And about this intercessor business, we read in Isaiah that God said, "I looked about, but there was no one to help, I was appalled that there was no one to lend support..."

We are all called to be intercessors – prayer partners for others. Intercession is a matter of the heart – a love affair with the people of God. Don't be afraid to be a prayer lover of others.

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In his letter to the Thessalonians, Paul said, "... we were gentle among you, as a nursing mother cares for her children." We ought to ask God to fill us with compassion – to let our hearts become tender for the other people of God.

Now, many of us are raised or fall into the Christian habit of thinking, "Oh I'll say a prayer for so and so..." Well that's nice – but that isn't at all what intercessory prayer is.

Intercessory prayer means becoming a holy warrior for the people of God... having confidence and having a holy boldness before the Lord as you plead for your brothers and sisters. It is a continuous action as you remind God of his mercy and his goodness... and even though our prayer may be flawed or weak or distracted, remember also what Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans – "The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings. And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention... because the Spirit intercedes... according to the will of God."

To you young men - you might ask "Who should I pray for? And does God really listen to my prayers?" Pray for your parents... in gratitude for them... and for their needs. Pray for your brothers in Scouting... pray for your leaders.

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Pray for our country... pray for our president - pray for your teachers and schools. There is much evil in the world... and a lot of it doesn't look like evil, so there is much need for prayers.

Now again -- you might say, "I'm 12 years old -- does God really listen to me?" Of course He does. Over and over -- Jesus told us adults that we should have the faith and the relationship with God that children have. Unless you become as children... as God's little ones... you will not enter into heaven. Jesus has appeared to small children. Jesus' mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary has often appeared to young children... their prayer... their innocence is pleasing to God.

So again – while it is nice to offer a single Hail Mary or some other prayer for the intention of someone who has been diagnosed with cancer or Alzheimer's – if you really believe in the power of prayer – if you believe that no prayer is ever lost or empty... then perhaps you will take on the role of being an on-going intercessor in prayer for the needs of others. And if at first your prayer isn't answered – in boldness don't be afraid to keep coming back to God as Abraham did.

The young children at Fatima and other places -- they are wonderful in God's eyes. And so are you. Pray for me... and I'll pray for you. Pray for others -- pray often...and God will respond.

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Reading 1

[Gn 18:20-32](#)

In those days, the LORD said: "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great,
and their sin so grave,
that I must go down and see whether or not their actions
fully correspond to the cry against them that comes to me.
I mean to find out."

While Abraham's visitors walked on farther toward Sodom,
the LORD remained standing before Abraham.

Then Abraham drew nearer and said:

"Will you sweep away the innocent with the guilty?
Suppose there were fifty innocent people in the city;
would you wipe out the place, rather than spare it
for the sake of the fifty innocent people within it?
Far be it from you to do such a thing,
to make the innocent die with the guilty
so that the innocent and the guilty would be treated alike!
Should not the judge of all the world act with justice?"

The LORD replied,

"If I find fifty innocent people in the city of Sodom,
I will spare the whole place for their sake."

Abraham spoke up again:

"See how I am presuming to speak to my Lord,
though I am but dust and ashes!

What if there are five less than fifty innocent people?

Will you destroy the whole city because of those five?"

He answered, "I will not destroy it, if I find forty-five there."

But Abraham persisted, saying "What if only forty are found there?"

He replied, "I will forbear doing it for the sake of the forty."

Then Abraham said, "Let not my Lord grow impatient if I go on.

What if only thirty are found there?"

He replied, "I will forbear doing it if I can find but thirty there."

Still Abraham went on,

"Since I have thus dared to speak to my Lord,
what if there are no more than twenty?"

The LORD answered, "I will not destroy it, for the sake of the twenty."

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But he still persisted:

"Please, let not my Lord grow angry if I speak up this last time.

What if there are at least ten there?"

He replied, "For the sake of those ten, I will not destroy it."

[Ps 138:1-2, 2-3, 6-7, 7-8](#)

Responsorial Psalm

R. (3a) Lord, on the day I called for help, you answered me.

I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with all my heart,

for you have heard the words of my mouth;

in the presence of the angels I will sing your praise;

I will worship at your holy temple

and give thanks to your name.

R. Lord, on the day I called for help, you answered me.

Because of your kindness and your truth;

for you have made great above all things

your name and your promise.

When I called you answered me;

you built up strength within me.

R. Lord, on the day I called for help, you answered me.

The LORD is exalted, yet the lowly he sees,

and the proud he knows from afar.

Though I walk amid distress, you preserve me;

against the anger of my enemies you raise your hand.

R. Lord, on the day I called for help, you answered me.

Your right hand saves me.

The LORD will complete what he has done for me;

your kindness, O LORD, endures forever;

forsake not the work of your hands.

R. Lord, on the day I called for help, you answered me.

[Col 2:12-14](#)

Reading 2

Brothers and sisters:

You were buried with him in baptism,

in which you were also raised with him

through faith in the power of God,

who raised him from the dead.

And even when you were dead

in transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh,

he brought you to life along with him,

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having forgiven us all our transgressions;
obliterating the bond against us, with its legal claims,
which was opposed to us,
he also removed it from our midst, nailing it to the cross.

[Lk 11:1-13](#)

Gospel

Jesus 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."
He said to them, "When you pray, say:
Father, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread
and forgive us our sins
for we ourselves forgive everyone in debt to us,
and do not subject us to the final test."

And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend
to whom he goes at midnight and says,
'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread,
for a friend of mine has arrived at my house from a journey
and I have nothing to offer him,'
and he says in reply from within,
'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked
and my children and I are already in bed.
I cannot get up to give you anything.'
I tell you,
if he does not get up to give the visitor the loaves
because of their friendship,
he will get up to give him whatever he needs
because of his persistence.

"And I tell you, ask and you will receive;
seek and you will find;
knock and the door will be opened to you.
For everyone who asks, receives;
and the one who seeks, finds;
and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.
What father among you would hand his son a snake
when he asks for a fish?

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Or hand him a scorpion when he asks for an egg?
If you then, who are wicked,
know how to give good gifts to your children,
how much more will the Father in heaven
give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?"