

Ordinary Time 29C 2016

Prayer

I would like to speak to you today about prayer; and in doing so I want to make two points. First, if we are to pray, we need to be persistent in our prayer, persistent like the widow that Jesus applauds in today's gospel. Second, when we pray, we must join our prayer with the prayer of Jesus, who prays for us and with us as Moses prayed for the people of Israel, as described in today's first reading.

First, we need to be persistent in prayer. We need to pray regularly, every day; we need to pray with persistence. We need to pray in the morning, when we rise. We need to pray in the evening, before we lie down to sleep. We need to pray throughout the day, even when we are working. We need to pray at night because each time we lie down to sleep, we anticipate the moment of death when we will sleep in Christ. We need to pray in the morning, because each morning when we rise we anticipate our resurrection with Christ.

But it is not easy to pray on a regular basis, day after day. There are so many reasons not pray: We are tired. We are busy. Prayer doesn't seem to change anything. Our prayer is empty and dry. But it is only when we are persistent and pray regularly that prayer changes and transforms our lives.

Second, we need to pray in and with Christ. Although we may pray alone, in the quiet of our room, we are never alone when we pray, for the risen Christ is

always present to us, praying and interceding with and for us. In today's first reading, Moses prays for the people of Israel as they struggle in battle against their foes. So long as Moses intercedes for them, however, Israel is victorious. And so it is with Christ. So long as we pray in and with Christ, our prayer is victorious. So long as Christ intercedes for us, we are victorious. So long as we pray in and with Christ our prayer is heard, even when it seems dry and empty to us.

I pray every morning, before Mass, for about an hour. I pray the psalms; I read the scriptures, and I spend quiet time in the presence of the Lord. I pray every evening before I sleep. Again, I pray the psalms and read the scriptures, and I spend quiet time in the presence of the Lord. And throughout the day, I find myself in conversation with the Lord, asking why this or that is happening, asking for the strength, the grace, and the insight to do the right thing.

My prayer is often dry and routine, and there are times I am discouraged. But I have learned that when I pray regularly, especially when it is difficult to pray, I draw closer to Christ. More importantly, I know that Christ is always praying with and for me so that as weak as my prayer may be, it is strong in Christ.

Prayer is the life-blood of our relation with Christ. Through prayer we enter more deeply into the mystery of Christ. Without prayer, our life and union with Christ withers and dies. In the coming week think about the way you pray. If your

prayer life is strong, well and good! But if it is not, take this opportunity to renew and deepen your relationship with Christ once more.