

29TH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME – YEAR C

Why does Jesus encourage us to persevere in prayer, crying out to God day and night ?

The main reason, I would argue, is that prayer is how we make contact with God. It is the way in which we interact with God. And scripture reassures us over and over again that God is listening:

“He shall call upon me and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him;” (Psalm 91:15) *“And it shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear;”* (Isaiah 65:24) *“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”* (Matthew 7:7)

Jesus calls us to know God as ‘Father’. And if God is Father then we are his children. God’s Fatherhood implies a personal relationship with us. As Christians, this way of relating to God has become so commonplace that we fail to recognise how unusual this is among the religions of the world. Only Christians routinely speak of God as Father.

Every meaningful relationship requires contact & communication. More often than not we communicate using words, but we also use gestures, forms of non-verbal communication. These words and gestures are the ways by which we show love for one another. They are also the ways by which we let the other person know what our needs are.

Without contact and communication any relationship will become barren and lifeless. The is also true of our relationship with God. Without the regular contact and communication that prayer affords, our relationship with God would become lifeless. We may still believe in God, but we would cease to know God as our Father. Prayer is essential!

We must remember however that while this is a personal relationship, it is not a relationship between equals. God is beyond all human imagining,

"... my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD . For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8-9)

Prayer teaches humility to the one who prays. The practice of praying reminds us of our own insufficiency, our inability to meet our deepest needs. Through prayer we come to know that we stand before God with empty hands. It is this empty handedness that opens us up to what God wants to give us.

So how are we to do this? How can we pray constantly, crying out to God day and night? After all we are busy people and we have busy lives. The Catechism provides an answer, in the words of Origen, one of the great minds of the early Church,

"He 'prays without ceasing' who unites prayer to works and good works to prayer.' Only in this way can we consider as realisable the principle of praying without ceasing." (CCC 2660)

Our actions are also our prayers. Prayer is made up of word and deed, each nourishing and the other. So, do we pray through our actions. On this Mission Sunday let us renew our commitment to make our lives a living prayer.

May we learn to bow and bend low before the God who made us. And at the end of our mass today, when we receive the final blessing, let us go forth, glorifying God by our lives.