

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

A Message from Fr. Mark

All three of our parish priests are happy to be “back.” Fr. Joe Maghinay is happy that he has his doctor’s permission to resume his ministry. Fr. Matthew and I once served at St. Luke’s and the Cathedral parishes, respectively, and now we are happy to be back in Stockton after many years serving in the “Southern Kingdom” of our diocese, which is Stanislaus County. As we resume our work here, the readings for today’s Mass are a good reminder of one of the most important aspects of priestly ministry: priestly prayer.

In today’s Gospel, “Jesus told his disciples a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without growing weary” (Luke 18:1). He was telling his twelve apostles, who would be the first priests, that they must be men of prayer. Using a clever parable, he told them they should be like a widow who kept insisting day and night that her case be heard. A priest should not rely solely on his own frenetic activity lest he become a mere social worker. The power of prayer and the sacraments are what gives efficacy to priestly ministry. There is a proverb that says we should “Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you.”

Today’s readings tell spiritual leaders that they must not rely only on their own efforts, but must pray for the people. In our first reading today, we see Moses in his usual position: he is always in the priestly position of standing “in the breach” between God and the people, usually on a mountain, interceding for them. In today’s passage, he is “standing on top of the hill with the staff of God in his hand” praying for the Israelite army fighting below. The foot soldiers could have complained to him: “Why don’t you take that stick and come down here and help us fight?” But everyone discovered that if Moses stood on the hill holding his staff aloft, the Israelites had the better of the fight. “Moses’ hands, however, grew tired, so they put a rock in place for him to sit on, while Aaron and Hur supported his hands. . . .” (cf. Exodus 17:8-13).

In the same way we must support our priests who raise up the wood of the Cross and hold their hands up praying for the people. It is not appropriate for the priest to neglect his prayer. The Apostles were the first priests and they chose deacons to work with the poor because “It is not right for us to neglect the word of God to serve at table. . . . we shall devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:2,4).

In our second reading today, St. Paul told the bishop, Timothy, to “know the sacred scriptures” so that he could be “competent” and “equipped” to “proclaim the word persistently, whether it is convenient or inconvenient” (2 Timothy 3:17; 4:2).

Priests and bishops should not think that their power lies in their own busy activity, but rather in raising their hands to humbly pray to the Father, as Jesus did. Pope Francis once reprimanded his brother bishops by saying that some of them had “grown weary of the humility of Christ.”

Please pray for priests, that they will be spiritual men of humble prayer, and find their strength in GOD ALONE!

Last Sunday, Pope Francis canonized John Henry Newman (1801-1890), who was England’s most well-known Anglican priest when he taught at Oxford University. In 1845, however, he risked everything by becoming a Catholic. He became a Catholic priest two years later, and established an “Oratory of St. Philip Neri” in England. He was a renowned scholar, theologian, poet and homilist. He was made a Cardinal in 1879 and died in 1890 at the age of 89.

Pope Francis read a quote from one of Newman's sermons about how we should act as Christians: "The Christian has a deep, silent, hidden peace, which the world sees not. . . . The Christian is cheerful, easy, kind, gentle, courteous, candid, unassuming; has no pretense. . .with so little that is unusual or striking in his bearing, that he may easily be taken at first sight for an ordinary man."

The story of the miracle that allowed for the canonization of Blessed Cardinal Newman was a good example of the efficacy of prayer. Melissa Villalobos was a Catholic wife and mother from Chicago who first heard about Cardinal John Henry Newman "just by accident" in 2000, while she was getting ready for work and ironing her clothes and saw a program about him on EWTN, which greatly inspired her.

Villalobos had had a history of complications during childbirth, and when she was pregnant with her fifth child, she was diagnosed with subchorionic hematoma, a condition that could cause the mother to hemorrhage to death. She was ordered to be on strict bed rest, which was difficult because she had four other young children. A week later she began hemorrhaging. She describes the fact that she collapsed in her bathroom, but did not have her cell phone to call for help, and so she cried out: "Please, Cardinal Newman, make the bleeding stop." The bleeding stopped immediately, and she stood up and smelled a wonderful aroma of roses that filled the air. The pregnancy continued without complications and her daughter, Gemma, was born completely healthy.

The canonization Mass was celebrated in St. Peter's Square and was attended by Prince Charles and delegates from the Church of England. In the same Mass, the pope also canonized three religious sisters and one laywoman:

Saint Mother Mariam Thresia (1876-1926) was an Indian mystic and founder of the Congregation of the Holy Family. The Syro-Malabar Catholic foundress received the stigmata and would sometimes levitate during prayer.

Saint Giuseppina Vannini (1859-1911) was a religious sister from Rome known for founding the congregation of the Daughters of St. Camillus dedicated to serving the sick and suffering.

Sister Dulce Lopes Pontes (1914-1992) founded the largest charitable organization in Brazil providing healthcare, welfare, and education service. Nominated twice for the Nobel Peace Prize, she is the first Brazilian-born female saint.

Saint Marguerite Bays (1815-1879) was a seamstress in Switzerland who was dedicated to serving the poor and sick. She had great love for the rosary and Eucharistic adoration. When she was diagnosed with advanced cancer in 1853, she prayed to the Virgin Mary to be able to suffer with Jesus rather than to be healed. However, on the day that Bl. Pius IX proclaimed the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, Sept. 8, 1854, she was miraculously healed.

Pope Francis said that she "she speaks to us of the power of simple prayer, enduring patience and silent self-giving. . . . That is how the Lord made the splendor of Easter radiate in her life."



Reading 1 [EX 17:8-13](#)

In those days, Amalek came and waged war against Israel.
Moses, therefore, said to Joshua,
"Pick out certain men,
and tomorrow go out and engage Amalek in battle.
I will be standing on top of the hill
with the staff of God in my hand."
So Joshua did as Moses told him:
he engaged Amalek in battle
after Moses had climbed to the top of the hill with Aaron and Hur.
As long as Moses kept his hands raised up,
Israel had the better of the fight,
but when he let his hands rest,
Amalek had the better of the fight.
Moses' hands, however, grew tired;
so they put a rock in place for him to sit on.
Meanwhile Aaron and Hur supported his hands,
one on one side and one on the other,
so that his hands remained steady till sunset.
And Joshua mowed down Amalek and his people
with the edge of the sword.

Responsorial Psalm [PS 121:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8](#)

R. (cf. 2) **Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.**

I lift up my eyes toward the mountains;
whence shall help come to me?
My help is from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.

R. **Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.**

May he not suffer your foot to slip;
may he slumber not who guards you:
indeed he neither slumbers nor sleeps,
the guardian of Israel.

R. **Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.**

The LORD is your guardian; the LORD is your shade;
he is beside you at your right hand.
The sun shall not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.

R. **Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.**

The LORD will guard you from all evil;
he will guard your life.
The LORD will guard your coming and your going,
both now and forever.

R. **Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.**

Reading 2 [TM 3:14-4:2](#)

Beloved:

Remain faithful to what you have learned and believed,

because you know from whom you learned it,
and that from infancy you have known the sacred Scriptures,
which are capable of giving you wisdom for salvation
through faith in Christ Jesus.

All Scripture is inspired by God
and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction,
and for training in righteousness,
so that one who belongs to God may be competent,
equipped for every good work.

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus,
who will judge the living and the dead,
and by his appearing and his kingly power:
proclaim the word;
be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient;
convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching.

Alleluia[HEB 4:12](#)

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

The word of God is living and effective,
discerning reflections and thoughts of the heart.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel[LK 18:1-8](#)

Jesus told his disciples a parable
about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary.
He said, "There was a judge in a certain town
who neither feared God nor respected any human being.
And a widow in that town used to come to him and say,
'Render a just decision for me against my adversary.'
For a long time the judge was unwilling, but eventually he thought,
'While it is true that I neither fear God nor respect any human being,
because this widow keeps bothering me
I shall deliver a just decision for her
lest she finally come and strike me.'"
The Lord said, "Pay attention to what the dishonest judge says.
Will not God then secure the rights of his chosen ones
who call out to him day and night?
Will he be slow to answer them?
I tell you, he will see to it that justice is done for them speedily.
But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"