

Power of prayer during Lent

Prayer is communication with God. When we pray, God talks to us, and we talk to God. We listen to God, and God listens to us. Prayer connects us with God.

If we have problems, God is available through prayer. If we are in a difficult situation, prayer brings us comfort and relief. The difficult situation may not change, but our ability to address the situation can change.

Prayer makes God available to us. Prayer brings a sense of peace in our lives in the mist of turmoil. Prayer nourishes our relationship with Jesus.

St. John Baptiste Marie Vianney, the Cure of Ars said: "We shall never return to God, if we do not have recourse to prayer. Yes, my dear children, with a prayer well said, we can command Heaven and earth, and all will obey us."

St. John Chrysostom wrote: "Prayer and converse with God is a supreme good: it is a partnership and union with God. As the eyes of the body are enlightened when they see light, so our spirit, when it is intent on God, is illumined by his infinite light."

Prayer takes four forms. They are prayer of petition, prayer of thanksgiving, prayer of contrition and prayer of praise. All four of these prayer forms need to be present for a well-balanced prayer life.

For most of us prayer of petition is where we devote most of our time in prayer. We ask God to give us something. We might pray for a sick family member to be restored to health. Presently, many people are praying to find a job. People are praying to be able to pay the mortgage and the tuition bills for their children. People ask God to heal broken relationships.

The second form of prayer is prayer of thanksgiving. Do we take time to thank God for all that he has given to us? Do we appreciate our gift of faith, our family, our friends, our health?

When our prayers are answered, do we take time to thank God? Do we forget all of his gifts to us?

Jesus healed 10 lepers. Only one of them took the time to thank him. Jesus was upset and said: "Were not all 10 made clean? The other nine, where are they?" (Lk 17:18)

The third form of prayer is prayer of contrition or sorrow. Do we tell God we are sorry for our sins? Do we go to confession to have our sins forgiven?

Confession is one of the seven sacraments. How often do we avail ourselves of this sacrament? Each Wednesday evening during Lent, "The Light is On" in all Catholic churches for confession.

Jesus gave the church the authority to forgive sins in his name. "Whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven" (Mt 16:19).

The fourth form of prayer is prayer of praise or adoration. We spend time worshiping God because he is the Supreme Being. Pope John Paul II said: "Through adoration, the Christian mysteriously contributes to the radical transformation of the world and to the sowing of the Gospel."

People often ask the following question: "Why are my prayers not answered?"

God may delay answering our prayer requests because He wants us to develop perseverance. If all of our requests were answered immediately, we would not develop perseverance.

St. Monica prayed for almost 30 years for her son, St. Augustine. She did not quit. She persevered in her prayer. We are called to do the same.

Jesus tells us: "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and the door shall be opened to you (Mt 7:7-8). He does not tell us when we shall receive, when we shall find, or when the door will be opened."

During this holy season of Lent let prayer become an essential part of each of our lives, and may continue after we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus.

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