

21st Week After Pentecost – Tuesday

TODAY'S READINGS, FOLLOWED BY A FEW SMALL PASTORAL AND PERSONAL THOUGHTS.

Colossians 1:1-2, 7-11 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother, 2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; 8 Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit. 9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

Luke 8:1-3 And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him, 2 And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, 3 And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.

Colossians 1:9-11 **For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;**

The Apostle provides us with a “template” for how to pray for others. See how vehemently he prays for others! When I read this passage, I am convicted about how little I pray for others, and how weak my prayers are compared to the Apostle.

Things are definitely better now that I have some time to breathe and am not either working at night, sleeping, feeling like a “zombie”, or at church. I have a regular prayer rule in which I pray for everyone in my flock, by name, every day. I want my prayer to be as warm and intense as the Apostle, and also as often, but at this point in time, I am what I am. So, I pray, knowing that I should be better, and also knowing that if I pray, I will become better (at prayer, and everything else in the spiritual life).

There are few of us who can pray with the depth of emotion, empathy and longing for the well-being of others that the Apostle possesses, but we must pray. A Christian principle is that if we try, with God's help, we will become better (I believe that this principle is so important that I have said something like this maybe a *zillion* times in my homilies). So, let us at least pray for others.

I have recommended to many personally to make a *small* list of loved ones and to pray for everyone on that list everyday (I will send my dyptichs, which have all the parish member's names, to those who ask). I should be on that list, because I am your unworthy pastor, and I need the grace of God to guide my flock wisely.

We should begin by merely saying the Jesus prayer for each person, i.e.

“Lord Jesus Christ son of God, have mercy upon the Priest Seraphim”

If this is too much for us, then all we need say is:

“Lord have mercy upon the Priest Seraphim”.

This is the beginning for us. If we are faithful in prayer for others, God will guide us to deeper, more earnest and heartfelt prayer, like the Apostle’s.

I have meant for a long time to write a little essay that I have considered entitling “The hardest thing I did today”, or something like it. It would be about prayer. **The hardest thing I do each day is pray for others.** There are a multitude of distractions that attempt to keep me from this task. And then when I am praying, there is this “voice” that is whispering to me “Why bother the master?” (Mark 5:35). God will hear the “effective prayer of a righteous man” (James 5:16), and I am not righteous. How can I expect God to hear my prayer? My state of mind is distracted, and wooden, and how can I expect God to hear me in such a state?

These are powerful emotions, and they are from the pit of Hell. It is true that my prayer can be distracted and wooden, but I know that if I try to pray, I will learn to pray! I also know that my intent is good, even if my performance is flawed. God sees into our heart, and knows our intent, and helps us. If am firmly convinced that the most important time of the day is when I pray for others, and no matter how “well” I did, **it is the best thing that I do every day.**

I urge you to pray for others every day. Do not listen to the thoughts that tell you that your efforts are wasted. Just pray.

Priest Seraphim Oct 19/Nov 3 2008.

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