

MAY JESUS CHRIST BE PRAISED

FEBRUARY 12, 2017

SPIRITUAL PONDERINGS

PRAYER Part II

I hope these reflections on prayers will give you the freedom to discover your own style of prayer that brings you closer to God.

3. Don't Compare

In a small country village in Sicily, there were two brothers, renowned members of the local Mafia. They were mean, bad and very rich. No one had a good word to say about them. Indeed, everyone seemed to have a story about how they had either been cheated or maligned by the brothers.

One day, one of the brothers, Luigi died. The surviving brother, Jo - with a rare touch of conscience felt that something nice should be said about his brother Luigi at the funeral. So, he went to the local pastor and said: I know that folk in the village hate us, and they don't know the half of what we have been up to. However, I want you to say something nice about Luigi at his funeral. I want you to say that Luigi was a saint when you preach. If you will agree to do that, I'll show my gratitude by giving \$100,000.00 towards the repair of the church. And here's the check for the amount. If you don't, you know my reputation.

The priest thought about it fleetingly agreed and took the check.

A week later, the whole village turned out for the funeral and everyone wondered what the priest would say. After the opening hymns, had been sung and the readings had been read, the priest climbed up into the pulpit and

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delivered his sermon. Eyeing the brother, sitting in the front row, the priest said how evil the pair of them had been. He went on to say how Luigi had cheated, not only in business but on his wife, how he had lied and how had had no concern for anyone but himself. In fact he went on to say what a downright scoundrel Luigi had been.

After ten minutes of preaching in this vein, the priest, being the man of integrity, ended his sermon with these words: "But compared to his brother, Jo - Luigi was a saint!"

Breaking Open The Word

6TH Sun. in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 76 Gospel MT 5:17-37

Spiritual Reflection: The most important question a bride or groom makes on his or her wedding day is how they will view their marriage. Will they see it as a contract (something agreed upon that can end when it is no longer beneficial for one or both parties) or as a covenant (the formation of sacred kinship/a sacred bond that cannot be broken)? If they look upon their marriage as a contract than they will see their family as something that restricts their freedom and burdens them like a ball and chain but if they view their marriage as a covenant they will see their marriage a mystical reality as a gift from God. Our society has chosen to view marriage as a contract and not a covenant. The Church says that marriage should be a covenant. God gets to decide what marriage is and we believe that God speaks through His Church.

Spiritual Questions:

1. Is marriage a contract or a covenant?
2. If marriage is not "for better or worse till death do them part" then what good is marriage?
3. Does your "yes" mean "yes"?
4. How have people used religion as an excuse to do bad things?
5. Does people doing bad things in the name of religion make God bad?

Another danger in the spiritual life is to find ourselves comparing ourselves to others. I remember when I had been in the seminary for two years and a potential new student came to Mass. This potential seminarian stuck out like a sore thumb because everything he did was so exaggerated. For example, if we would respond "Amen" to a prayer; he would respond "AAAMMMEEENNN!!!" While there was a part of me that found this very annoying there was also a part of me that thought that maybe he responded this way because he was going deeper in prayer. This potential seminarian also had a much cooler vocation story than me which included being in the navy on shore leave, getting lost on a desert island, and being rescued by Catholic monks.

My vocations story was nothing near that exciting. Fast forward many years and he is a lawyer and father of three and I am a Catholic priest. Each day I thank God for giving me the grace to get over my desire to think that the other guy had a better prayer life than me.

Sadly, in my time as a priest, I have met many people who have given up on praying because they think they know someone whose prayer life is better. They have given into the illusion that prayer is some sort of competition. Prayer though is between you and God and no one else. We can have mentors, guides, and directors who help us mature in our prayer life but we can never say that our prayer life is better or worse than another.

4. Communal/Individual

My parish youth minister is fond of saying "The Catholic life was never meant to be lived alone." As Catholics, we believe that God did not come to save us as individuals but rather as a community (a Church). If we take a close look at Jesus' ministry on earth, He made every effort to include others as a part of His ministry and thus community prayer is important to Catholics.

Community prayer is important but this does not mean individual prayer experiences are bad. Quite the contrary there is many times in the Gospel where Jesus would show the importance of private prayer by going off by himself to prayer on several occasions.

PRAYER OF THE WEEK

The Paradoxical Commandments by Mother Teresa

People are illogical, unreasonable, and self-centered. Love them anyway. If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives. Do good anyway. If you are successful, you will win false friends and true enemies. Succeed anyway. The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. Do good make you vulnerable. Be honest and frank anyway. The biggest men and women with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest men and women with the smallest minds. Think big anyway. People favor underdogs but follow only top

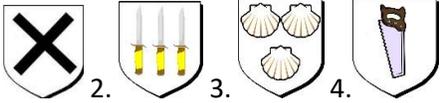
dogs. Fight for a few underdogs anyway. What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight. Build anyway. People really need help but may attack you if you do help them. Help people anyway. Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth. Give the world the best you have anyway."



CATHOLIC TRIVIA

Last Week Answers:

Identify the following Apostles' Coat of Arms.



1. Saint Andrew 2. Saint Bartholomew 3. Saint James The Greater 4. St. James The Lesser

This Week's Questions: **True or False**

1. Baptism is required to receive the other Sacraments.
2. Anyone can Baptize in case of an emergency if they intend to do what the Church means by Baptism.
3. The word "Christ" means "Son of David"
4. The word "Eucharist" means "Thanksgiving".

CATHOLIC HUMOR

Catholic Laughs

1. A husband and wife are in church. The preacher notices that the husband has fallen asleep and says to the wife, "Wake your husband up!" The wife answers, "You're the one who made him fall asleep, you wake him up!"
2. A little boy wants a bike for Christmas really badly, but the kid is a real bad seed, and he knows it. He writes a letter to Jesus. "Dear Jesus, if I get a bike for Christmas, I'll be good for a whole week." He thinks about it, crosses out what he wrote, and says, "I can't be good for a whole week, I'll be good for five days." He crosses that out and writes, "I'll be good for four days." Then he thinks again and says, "Can't do that." He gets down to one day and says, "I can't even be good for a day." Then in frustration, goes in his mother's room and get the statue of the Virgin Mary, wraps it up in a blanket, puts it in a paper bag, throws it in the closet and says, "Dear Jesus, if I don't get a bike for Christmas, you'll never see your mother again!"

CATHOLIC QUOTES

No one, however weak, is denied a share in the victory of the cross. No one is beyond the help of the prayer of Christ. His prayer brought benefit to the multitude that raged against him. How much more does it bring to those who turn to him in repentance. – St. Leo the Great

As they were looking on, so we too gaze on his wounds as he hangs. We see his blood as he dies. We see the price offered by the redeemer, touch the scars of his resurrection. He bows his head, as if to kiss you. His heart is made bare open, as it were, in love to you. His arms are extended that he may embrace you. His whole body is displayed for your redemption. Ponder how great these things are. Let all this be rightly weighed in your mind: as he was once fixed to the cross in every part of his body for you, so he may now be fixed in every part of your soul. – St. Augustine

Spiritual Adoption

Spiritual Adoption 0-1 Month

I am asking you to spiritual adopt a child who is in danger of being aborted by praying the following prayer every day for the child.

"Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I love you very much. I beg you to spare the life of [baby's name] the unborn baby that I have spiritually adopted who is in danger of abortion." - Prayer of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen.

You can also keep track of your spiritual baby's progress by checking out the informational articles below each month.

DAY 1

–Developing Baby- "I'm here!"

At the moment, the father's sperm and mother's egg unite a new and unrepeatable human being comes into existence, complete with his own unique set of DNA. Although she is only one cell, everything about this little person is already present: color of eyes, blood type, the height she will grow to be, color of hair – everything! She will play a role in her family and her community – a role only she can play! Nothing is added after conception to make her a complete human being. She already exists; all she needs is nourishment, a safe, warm environment, and most of all – love. Her parents don't even know she exists yet. Pray for them to safely bring their baby to birth so she can fulfill the mission God has for her.