



How a Prayer becomes a Prayer

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2021 has been named an *Ignatian Year*, by the Society of Jesus, marking the 500th year since St. Ignatius of Loyola converted to Christianity. The motto chosen for this year is “*seeing all things new in Christ*.” This offers us the perfect opportunity to look at our prayer life with *fresh eyes*.

When we were young, we learned to pray. “Now I lay me down to sleep..., Bless us O Lord, and these thy gifts...., Our Father, who art in heaven....” We learned that “prayer” was “talking to God.” As adults, we understand better that prayer is very much about building a relationship. Prayer is more than our “talking to God”. If we are to have a true relationship with our Creator, we also need to spend time “listening to God”. How would your relationships with the people in your lives be if you did ALL the talking? How would those relationships be if you only communicated once or twice a year?

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Our God wants to be part of our lives. He wants us to talk to Him, about anything and everything. He wants us to ask for His opinion, His advice, His direction for our lives. Why? Because He created us and He loves us. He proved His love by dying for us, in our place, so that we could spend eternity with Him. He sent His Holy Spirit to advocate for us, teach us, comfort us, strengthen and guide us through life's challenges.

Scripture tells us, ***“We urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, cheer the fainthearted, support the weak, be patient with all.... Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:14, 17-18.***

Wonderful. How do we go about praying without ceasing when our lives have been turned upside down and sideways? We try to admonish the idle. Trust me, they don't seem to appreciate our helpful comments! We try to cheer up those who are discouraged, encourage those who are worn and weary of life's battles, and boy oh boy does our patience get a work out on a daily basis! Still, when we sit in silence and review our day, we often feel we've come up short in making a positive difference in our world.

So, let's consider *“seeing all things new in Christ”* with the rest of 2021. Although it is in our nature to want to have things mapped out and nailed down in our lives, God just doesn't work that way. Mary most likely had plans for her life with her fiancé Joseph, but when God sent an angel with a totally unexpected proposition for her, she said, “Yes”. God didn't spell out how this decision would impact her plans or her life, but Mary trusted God enough to know that He would always want what

was best for her. She moved forward in faith. Let us begin looking at things with a new way by asking our Mother Mary to intercede for us, to help us to trust God's plan for us, even if, and especially when, we can't understand our present circumstances.

When asked how to pray by his disciples, Jesus gave us the *Our Father* as an example. Who better to teach us how to talk to God, then God's only begotten Son? Begin by acknowledging the facts – to Whom are we talking? God – *our Father*. Our Creator. There is NOTHING about us that He doesn't already know! We won't surprise Him with anything we've thought or done, and yet, He continues to love us unconditionally! Praise God for Who He Is and thank God for who we are, His adopted sons and daughters. Thank God that He is God . . . and that we are NOT! The *Our Father* demonstrates many dimensions of prayer: praising God, praying about God's will, petitioning for our needs, asking for forgiveness to heal our relationships, including the grace to forgive others, and asking for assistance in times of temptation and protection from evil.

“Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests known to God.” Philippians 4:6.

We have free will, so does everyone else on the planet and so consequently, we live in a fallen world. We know these things in our heads, but sometimes our hearts forget.

Sometimes we are responsible for our own dire straits, other times we are simply victims. So, when bad things happen to us, let our response not be *“why me?”* but

rather "how is God planning to use this challenge to help me grow closer to Him?" God always has a plan. God doesn't always share it with us ahead of time. We always need to remember, though, that God will use everything that we go through to our good and for us to reach eternal salvation.

"And we have this confidence in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us." 1 John 5:14.

"Trust me," we tell our children, "Mommy and Daddy know what's best for you." We'd do well to remember that when we are facing difficult times in our own lives. Our "Father" does know what is best for us! We need to re-learn (like an innocent child) how to "trust" our Abba! Easy to say, not so easy to do. How do we pray? While we can recite our "learned prayers" alone or with our faith community, we should not stop there. Our Father wants to hear from us - every day, all day. If our eyes could see clearly, and if we could actually see the spiritual dimension that surrounds us, we would be better able to realize that we don't even need words to speak to our God. Since He knows our every thought, let's talk to Him about everything. "Good morning Father, thank you for my night's rest and for my breath of life as a new day dawns. Good afternoon God, thank you for my delicious lunch and please help me get through this upcoming meeting at work. Good evening Father, please help me navigate this terrible commute. Bless the person who just cut me off, he may need my prayers today to help him with his challenges. Good night Father, thank you for another day on this earth. Please bless me with a restful sleep and heal my body so that I can serve you tomorrow. Help me to lighten someone else's load or provide a compassionate ear that helps someone to see You in my actions".

When we are truly devastated by our circumstances, when words fail us, the most honest prayer may merely be, "Jesus, help me."

He knows where we are, He knows what we need, we need simply to turn towards Him. Our Advocate, the Holy Spirit,

plays a supernatural role in our ability to pray. When we have trouble finding or articulating our needs, the Holy Spirit intercedes on our behalf in ways that bypass our understanding. The Holy Spirit searches our hearts and helps us to align with the will of our Father.

"In the same way, the Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings. And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit, because it intercedes for the holy ones according to God's will." Romans 8:26-27.

Prayer helps to direct our thoughts and our energy towards Jesus. Prayer helps us to focus on the One who can heal us and helps to drown out the noise of confusion, doubt and fear. Prayer helps restore our sense of peace in the midst of life's storms. Peace is not life without strife, but rather, serenity while enduring suffering. The more we invest in prayer, in talking with and listening to our God, the deeper our faith becomes. The more we pray, the more our life, itself, becomes our prayer to God.

**St. Augustine's Prayer to the Holy Spirit:
Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.
Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy. Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy. Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy. Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy. Amen.**

On all my hardest days, Lord Jesus, please wrap me in your arms and hold me. Jesus, always, help me. Amen.

Live like you are in a foxhole!

It is said that there are no atheists in a foxhole. Bullets flying over your head and nowhere to run and no calvary on the horizon. There is that moment of truth where you know

that **you** can't do anything on your own. Your ego, your talents, your gifts or your money are not sufficient to change your situation. You lose the **I** that you have always relied upon. You need God. You need the one that **is** sufficient.

2 Corinthians 12:9 "My Grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness."

I wasn't always a prayer warrior. I either didn't think about it as an option or I wasn't sure that I had an open line where I would be heard. I really fight my ego – the "I" can fix it, manage it, mend it, change it, improve it or make it go away – that personality that lives in me. So, you can imagine my angst when I first found myself in that foxhole. It is when you have to drop everything you hold to 'be' and accept and acknowledge that God is in control. The way I now try to live each day is to humbly accept that I am **not** in control. I can't make myself breathe or stand or talk or think. I can't stop the bullets. I am not the calvary.

I became a prayer warrior – slowly – over a life time of foxhole moments. I learned to fall on my knees and simply cry out for help. I know that I am only worthy of being heard through the blood of God's precious Son. But I **know** that I will be heard because that same Son told me so. **"And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."** Matthew 21:22

I have seen prayers answered. Some immediately and dramatically. Some I am still waiting for the answer to be made clear to me. I always add to my prayer "Lord, help me to accept Your will and Your timing." Prayer is humbling. It is the belief that God does hear but the

acceptance that the answer may not be apparent or 'right now'. But I am persistent. I am that 'squeaky wheel'. I am still praying the same prayer today that I have prayed for over 20 years. I know that I will one day get my answer or understand why it wasn't forthcoming. Read Matthew 15: 21-28 or Luke 11:5-13. Be persistent. Keep knocking.

The other big lesson that life has taught me is to be humble enough to ask others to pray for me when the need was bigger than I could manage. Get more voices raised, more voices knocking, more hearts humbled for your need. I was raised in a family where we didn't share with others the problems we were facing. Private people have a harder time asking others to join forces in their need. How sad. I learned that privacy is wonderful but doesn't always have a place when the need is one that needs to reach beyond our walls.

"Again, (amen) I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Matthew 8:1:19-20.

As some of us gather before Mass on Sunday to share the rosary we pray for those on our church family prayer request list. Joan one morning asked us to pray for those who have no one to pray for them. That hit my heart so hard. I never had thought of those who were so alone that no one joined in their prayer of need. Thanks to Joan this is now a part of my daily prayer as well as praying for those not only on our list but those who are still silently holding their needs to themselves.

I want to always remember I am in a foxhole – that my need to pray to the one who **is** in control is so much bigger and greater than my 'I got this' personality.

Outreach Ministry

Mission San Antonio de Padua supports several outreach programs. We are looking for someone to help us grow this ministry. It won't take a lot of time, you do not need any training and you will be answering God's call to minister to your brothers and sisters.

Programs:

Communion Service for the Homebound: Please let us know if you need communion brought to you. Receiving the Eucharist is fundamental to our Catholic beliefs.

Prayer Circle: Are you willing to pray for those in need? Do you need special prayer? The prayer circle is a great way to reach out and reach up! You don't need to be able to travel; prayer requests can be shared within the group via the telephone or email. A scheduled prayer time of 8 a.m., 12 noon and 8 p.m. unites those offered prayers. Join in any time or all times to add your united voice of prayer for those in our parish family who are in need.

Meals during a family illness/hospitalization: Would you be able to provide a meal for someone who is in need? Are you in need of some help while you deal with health issues?

Carpooling services for Mass: If you need a ride to Mass or if you can provide a ride, this might be the ministry for you.

Want to help in other ways? We are always looking for volunteers to help in the Padre's Garden, Clean the church or work on our necessary fund raisers. Call the Mission for more ideas.

If you are interested in lending a hand or would like to be remembered in any of these ministries, please contact Joan at the parish office.

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I was standing in the pouring rain one dark November night
Fighting off the bitter cold when she caught my eye
Her face was taugnt and her eyes were filled, and to my surprise
She pulled out a photograph and my heart just stopped inside
She said, "He would've been three today
I miss his smile, I miss his face"
What was I supposed to say, but

CHORUS

I believe always, always
Our Savior never fails
Even when all hope is gone
God knows our pain and his promise remains
He will be with you always

He was living in a broken world, dreaming of a home
His heart was barely keeping pace when I found him all alone
Remembering the way he felt when his daddy said goodbye
Fighting just to keep the tears and the anger locked inside
He's barely holding onto faith
But deliverance is on its way, cause

CHORUS

I believe always, always
Our Savior never fails
Even when all hope is gone
God knows our pain and his promise remains
He will be with you always

Friend, I don't know where you are and I don't know where you've been
Maybe you're fighting for your life or just about to throw the towel in
But if you're crying out for mercy, if there's no hope left at all
If you've given everything you've got and you're still about to fall
Well hold on, hold on, hold on, cause

I believe always, always
Our savior never fails
Even when all faith is gone
God knows our pain and his promise remains
Always, always, He will be with you always

There is a wrestling in my heart and my mind
A disturbance and a tension I cannot seem to drive
And if I'm honest, there's quite a bit of fear
To sit here in this silence and really hear You
What will you ask of me?
Will I listen to your voice when you speak?

Help me to move
Help me to see
Help me to do whatever you would ask of me
Help me to go
(Or) God help me to stay
I'm feeling so alone here
And I know that You're faithful But I can barely breathe
God help me

Sometimes things, they are black and white
But sometimes they are not and it leaves us torn inside
And in the middle we are left to wonder
Who we are, what You want and where we're going
Oh such a mystery
I don't always understand
But I believe

Help me to move
Help me to see
Help me to do whatever you would ask of me
Help me to go
(Or) God help me to stay
I'm feeling so alone here
And I know that You're faithful But I can barely breathe
God help me

I don't know the future
It's one day at a time
But I know I'll be okay with Your Hand holding mine
So take all my resistance
Oh God I need Your grace
One step and then the other Show me the way
Show me the way

Help me to move
Help me to see
Help me to do whatever you would ask of me
Help me to go
(Or) God help me to stay
I'm feeling so alone here
And I know that You're faithful But I can barely breathe
God help me