

## 6th Sunday of Easter “The Importance of Prayer” with Confirmation

Bishop Frank Schuster

I found an interesting selection of prayers once, it began with: Lord, help me to relax about insignificant details, beginning tomorrow at 11:41AM PST. God, help me to consider people's feelings, even if most of them are hypersensitive and wrong. God, help me to try not to run everything; but if You need some help, just ask. O God, please please let me win this lottery: I promise to pay you 10%. And finally, God, give me more patience, right now!

I found these prayers interesting because it made me pay attention to the little prayers I pray during the day. I think most of us say little prayers throughout the day. And not just the ones we direct to other cars that pass us on the freeway. I am talking about the little prayers we say like when we pass by a flower that is especially beautiful and say “thank you God”. Or when a meeting with someone is going well, or not so well, we have little prayers we offer to God throughout the day. We all do this don't we? It makes me believe that God has to be a tremendously patient with us to put up with all the prayers that we give him throughout the day.

The Gospel tells us that Jesus is in the Father and we are in him and Jesus is in us. This means we are intimately connected every minute of the day to Jesus, his Father, and the Holy Spirit. God knows about every instant of our lives because he is the precondition for our existing every second of everyday. To be baptized Christians is to enter into an eternal story of love that is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Apostle John tells us that God is love and all who live in love live in God. The first chapter of Genesis tells us that this is so because we are made in the image and likeness of this God who is love. St. Paul says when everything else is taken away, only faith, hope and love remain and the greatest of these is love.

Sin, therefore, is when we do not love as we ought. Sin separates us from God when we do not follow the commandments, when we do not treat God, others or ourselves for that matter in the loving way we should. We can look in the newspaper or news sites, or turn on the TV and we see a lot of sin in the world. There is a lot of hate and a lot of misuse of human freedom out there. Because we continually manage to litter our world with sin, our Father in heaven, out of love, sent his Son whom he loves to love us by his passion, death and resurrection, recreating us in his image and likeness, which of course is love. The love that processes forth from Father and Son is and is revealed to us as the Holy Spirit, who advocates for us and teaches us how to love in a world that can be at times very unloving.

This is where the little prayers we say throughout the day become very helpful. We offer a morning prayer when we first wake up to help us focus our attention on the day we have been given and the relationships entrusted to us. We offer meal time prayers to recognize that every gift we have comes from God. We offer prayers for the people

who mistreat us during the day because we know love also works for justice. This includes seeing difficult people not with our eyes but with God's eyes the best we can. When someone offers us a kindness or if we see something particularly beautiful during the day, like that flower I mentioned, we can offer a little prayer at these moments as well in thanksgiving. At the end of our day, we can call to mind all the prayers we offered during the day as we offer one final prayer before we sleep for whatever is on our hearts before we close our eyes.

You see, my friends, an essential characteristic of someone who is a follower of Jesus is someone who prays. The more we pray our way through this world, the more the Holy Spirit can work inside of us and through us to make the world a better place. St. Therese of Avila understood this. She had good advice for those who lived 500 years ago and it is good advice for us today with all the turmoil we deal with in the news or in our lives. She writes, "Let nothing disturb you. Let nothing frighten you. All things pass. God does not change. Patience achieves everything. Whoever has God lacks nothing. God alone suffices. Christ has no body now on earth but yours; no hands but yours; no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ must look out on the world. Yours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which He is to bless His people."

My friends, when it comes to the sacrament of confirmation, it is best to understand this sacrament as a sacrament that strengthens us to be Jesus' hands, eyes, and feet. Indeed, as many of you may have heard me say before, the word confirm in Latin means literally to strengthen. The sacrament of confirmation will strengthen you in your discipleship, inviting you into a deeper relationship with Jesus. This sacrament will help you to find the answers you seek in life that the world simply cannot provide you. This sacrament will help you give witness to God's love to the world so desperately hungering for it in a spirit of missionary discipleship as Pope Francis and now Pope Leo calls us to do. The sacrament ought to remind you when life gets hard or perhaps if life is hard for you right now, this one simple message. God loves you. With all that you are going through right now, God loves you. Even when you fail, or ashamed, God loves you. God loves you and will always be there for you if you just let him into your heart.

You see my friends, the irony that I pray you will come to realize in time if you haven't already: it was never you who chose God to be in your life. God chose you even before you were even born. You are wonderfully made body and soul from the moment you were conceived. You were made to be you, your best you, before time began. Always know that the Church is proud of you, and on behalf of everyone here, thank you for your witness. May the good work that God has begun in you be brought to completion through Christ our Lord. Amen.