

Several years back, St. Teresa of Calcutta appeared on **Robert Schuller's** television program. Schuller reminded her that the show was being carried all over America and in 22 foreign countries including her native Yugoslavia. He asked her if there was one message that she would like to convey to all those viewers. Her response was, "Yes, tell them to pray. And tell them to teach their children to pray." Prayer precedes good works in Mother Teresa's estimation. We connect with Christ before we can truly connect with our neighbor. Last Sunday, we heard the same message from the lips of Jesus. "**Martha, you are worried about too many things. Mary has chosen the better part.**"

There is a fascinating book entitled **Barriers to Christian Belief** by **Leonard Griffith**. In that book he dealt with some problems that have over the years been real obstacles for people in their prayer life. One of the barriers he listed was... "**unanswered prayer.**" It does seem to be a fact of our experience that many people do get discouraged and they do give up and drop out on the faith because they feel a sense of failure in their prayer life.

This leads us to ask then, "**Why do you pray?**" "**How do you pray?**" "**When do you pray?**" There are many questions and there is much misunderstanding about Why and how you pray.

First, we pray for our principal need: Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done. We begin by acknowledging who God is. Our prayer is not for God's benefit, but ours. We need to know to whom we are making our petitions. What is His nature? "Father." He is our loving Parent. And yet He is more. "Hallowed (Holy, Revered, Awe-inspiring) be Thy name." He is the Source of Our life. He is our ever-living Hope. Without Him we would not even exist.

Second, we pray for our physical need: Give us this day our daily bread. We pray that God will meet our daily needs. With this sentence we know that Christ means for prayer to be a daily exercise. An occasional nod in God's direction will not make it. We pray daily. And among the things that are legitimate for us to pray about are our physical needs. We have too many anxieties, worries, tensions, and ailments. We need to pray for healing, for peace, for tranquility.

Third, we pray for our personal need: Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. our next prayer is for forgiveness and the power to forgive others. Many persons would make this into a legalistic demand. "If you expect God to forgive you, you must forgive others!" That's true, of course. But forgiveness is not easy. Anger is easy. Forgiveness requires the grace of God. We can forgive because we have experienced forgiveness ourselves.

Lastly, we pray for our pious need: Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. ..." our final prayer is for guidance. It's a tricky world out there. There are many snares. We

need God's guidance in this world. We walk by faith praying each step of the way for His guidance.

How do you pray? We are not the first to ask. The disciples of Jesus came to Him one day and said, "Lord, teach us. Teach us to pray!"... When did the disciples ask for this? Was it after Jesus gave a lecture on prayer? No! Was it after Jesus led a seminar on prayer? No! Was it after Jesus preached a powerful sermon on prayer? No! None of these. "Jesus was praying in a certain place and when he finished, they said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray.'" They saw the power of prayer in Him. They saw how important prayer was to Him.

Prayer is not a magical means by which we get God to do what we want. He is not an ATM. We walk in, with a list of petitions, and walk out hoping a miracle to take place. No. Prayer is an inner openness to God which allows his divine power to be released in us. Ultimately, the power of prayer is not that we succeed in changing God, but that God succeeds in changing us.

There are occasions when prayer becomes the easiest thing to make excuses with. We have so many reasons and excuses for not praying and faithful into it. When we are too busy with our work at the office or at home, we cancel or delete from the planned schedule our prayer time or our bible reading schedule. St. Francis de Sales has this to say; "**A Christian need half an hour of prayer each day, except when we are busy, then we need an hour.**" It makes sense to me, when we are hungry, we eat food. And when we are very hungry, we eat even more food. Ever wonder about the acronym **ASAP**? "As soon as possible." Maybe if we think of this abbreviation in a different manner, we'll begin to find a new way to deal with those rough days along the way.

There's work to do, deadlines to meet, you've got no time to spare, But, as you hurry and scurry, ASAP: **Always Say a Prayer**. Amid family chaos, quality time is rare. Do your best; let God do the rest, ASAP: Always Say a Prayer. It may seem like your worries are more than you can bear. Slow down and take a breather, ASAP: Always Say a Prayer. God knows how stressful life is; he wants to ease our cares, and he'll respond to all your needs, ASAP: Always Say a Prayer.

God Bless You.