

## TWENTY NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, 2025

“As long as Moses kept his hands raised up, Israel had the better of the fight.” (Exodus 17:11). This passage from today’s Lesson from Exodus clearly states that as far as God is concerned, our prayers make a difference. God inspires our prayers and guides them, and acts in response to the dialogue with us that He Himself began. In His unfathomable love for us, Almighty God wills to be in a relationship with us, such that He restrains His infinite power, willing to act in cooperation with us. This graciousness on the part of the Eternal Creator toward finite creatures is astonishing, but the sacred Scriptures attest to it. God could do all that He wills to do while ignoring us completely, but that is not His choice. His choice is to pay attention to us. His choice is to be in dialogue with us, inspiring us to pray and then responding to the prayers that He Himself has inspired. While it certainly cannot be an equal relationship, we are invited, by God’s merciful will, to enter into a real relationship with God.

God wants us to pray.

“Will not God then secure the rights of His chosen ones who call to Him day and night?” (Luke 18:7) This passage from today’s Gospel from Luke reinforces the point of the first reading with the Lord’s own words. God could act entirely without our prayers, but He chooses not to. He chooses to invite us into relationship with Him, and at the heart of that relationship is prayer.

There no authentic relationship with God without prayer.

“All Scripture is inspired by God, and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3: 16-17) This passage from today’s Epistle from 2 Timothy makes the point that sacred Scripture must be at the heart of all of the Church’s teaching, activity, and prayer. The Church, necessarily and by Christ’s ordinance, has merely human teachers; but, to be authentic, their teaching has to be rooted in teaching that is not merely human, the teaching found in the inspired Scriptures. The inspired Scriptures do not teach the Church how to do every task - there is no specifically biblical way to scrub a floor, balance an account, or clean a wound. All authentically Christian activities must, however, be inspired spiritually and guided morally by the sacred Scriptures. Similarly, not all of our words of prayer need be taken directly from the Bible; nevertheless, in the inspired Scriptures, God Himself has given us words for prayer, and all the Church’s prayers must either be directly from the Bible or inspired by the Bible.

All authentically Christian prayer is biblical.

So, we have three points so far: God wants us to pray, there is no authentic relationship with God without prayer, and our prayer needs to be essentially biblical.

The sacred Scriptures make it clear that Christian prayer is rooted in Christian community. Christian prayer is primarily something that Christians do together, and secondarily something that they do separately. “Persevering daily with one mind in the Temple, they Broke the Bread in their homes” (Acts 2:46) “I desire that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without quarrelling and jealousy” (1 Timothy 2:8) “Persevere in prayer, and be watchful in Thanksgiving” (Colossians 4:2) “Do not stay away from the Assembly, as is the custom of some, but exhort one another, especially as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25) From the Apostolic times these verses describe until today, Christians have regarded it as essential not merely to pray but to come together for prayer.

Building on the foundation of the inspired Scriptures, the Church's ancient Tradition has from ancient times, had two daily forms of common prayer, the Mass, consisting of the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and the Divine Office, consisting of Biblical Psalms and Canticles and various readings and intercessions.

The celebration of the Holy Mass is first of all for Sunday, the Lord's Day, the Day of Resurrection. In addition to the primary Lord's Day Mass of Sunday morning, Mass of the Lord's Day is often celebrated also on Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon.

While the Lord's Day is the primary and essential day for Holy Mass, the Church has from early times celebrated Holy Mass also on particular feast days throughout the year, as well as on Fridays (as the day of the Lord's Passion) and on Saturday mornings (in honor of Mary). In places where there is a resident priest, the Church celebrates the Holy Mass on other days of the week as well, particularly during the 40 penitential days of Lent and the 50 celebratory days of Easter.

The Church also invites her people, particularly priests, deacons, and religious, to pray each day's Divine Office, particularly in the morning and the evening.

Through the Holy Mass and the Divine Office, the Church has, from the earliest times of her Tradition, fulfilled the Scriptural injunction, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing each other in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16)

I think that to have this round of services, the Holy Mass and the Divine Office, being offered daily in our church is deeply consoling. Whatever parishioners may be doing, they know that here, and in the Adoration Chapel more privately, prayers and Psalms are rising up to God. The prayers and holy thoughts that parishioners offer, wherever they may be, are gathered up into the Holy Mass and the Divine Office prayed here. In the Holy Mass, in particular, all the prayers of the people of this church are sprinkled with the Blood of the Lamb, and then rise up to God as a fragrant incense. All prayers, the prayers of the Divine Office in a particular way, are a spiritual sacrifice of praise. In the Holy Mass, this spiritual sacrifice of praise is united to the One Saving Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and becomes effective for our salvation and the salvation of all the world. Not only are all the people of the parish present spiritually when the Holy Mass and Divine Office are prayed here, but the blessed saints and holy angels are present as well, sympathising with our needs and joining our praise.

By prayer, both personal and common, the Good News of the Gospel that we are redeemed sinners soaks into us. It is not present in us naturally. It has to soak into us, and it does so through prayer. When that Good News has soaked into us, we begin truly to love God and to become holy in His sight. Such is the power of prayer.

By all our prayers, starting with the prayer of this holy Mass, may we be empowered to walk in the narrow way of Faith and Love until we come to what Faith hopes for and Love anticipates, Life Eternal with our Lord Jesus Christ in the happy eternity that He has prepared for us.

Amen.