

## HOMILY for 30<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year C

This Sunday's Gospel reminds us about the importance of having the right attitude in praying if we want God to answer our prayers. As I reflect on that, I'm reminded of this cute story.

Three clergymen were deep in a discussion of the best positions for praying while a telephone repairman worked nearby.

"Kneeling is definitely best," claimed one.

"No," another contended. "I get the best results standing with my arms outstretched to heaven."

"You're both wrong," the third argued. "The most effective prayer position is lying on the floor facedown."

The telephone repairman could contain himself no longer. "Hey, guys," he interrupted, "the best praying I ever did was hanging upside down from a telephone pole."

Anyway, we often think that we can just come to God with any kind of prayer; & God would answer it for us. In fact, last Sunday we were told that we should keep on praying like the widow did until our prayer would be answered. But, there are a few important notes about prayer that we should know about. For they will affect how our prayer might turn out.

In this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus wants to point out an important detail that might determine the outcome of our prayer. Apparently, our attitude during prayer would affect whether God would listen to our prayer or not. The Gospel of Luke says, "Jesus spoke this parable addressed to those who believed in their own self-righteousness while holding everyone else in contempt: 'Two men went up to the Temple to pray; one was a Pharisee, the other a tax collector. The Pharisee with head unbowed prayed in this fashion: 'I give you thanks, O God, that I am not like the rest of the world – grasping, crooked, adulterous – even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week. I pay tithes on all I possess.' The other man, however, kept his distance, not even daring to raise his eyes to heaven. All he did was beat his breast & say, 'O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.' Believe me, this man went home from the Temple justified, but the other did not.'" So, Jesus evidently wants us to know that if we have a humble, contrite, sorrowful attitude like the tax collector's, God would listen to our prayer faster. But, if we pray in a proud, self-righteous, judging attitude like the Pharisee did, then don't expect God to listen to it. That is one of the secrets for us to keep in mind about prayer if we want the Lord to hear our prayer.

As you can see, our attitude plays an important role in helping God answer our prayer or not. That is why on a few occasions Jesus has reminded His followers to leave their sacrifices at the foot of the Altar & go reconcile with their enemies before they offer their prayers & sacrifices to God. For He has realized that if they have a problem with someone, or they are angry about something, they cannot have the right disposition to come to God in prayer. They might say the wrong things & make a terrible prayer like the Pharisee did in today's Gospel. Of course, God would never listen to that kind of prayer. Anyhow, I don't know if you have ever wondered why the people of God would need people like Abraham, Moses, & priests of the Temple to offer prayers & sacrifices to God on their behalf. The reason for that is because those individuals are special people who have the right attitude & can represent the people of God to carry out that sacred duty. If they do not follow God's laws & have the correct disposition with

God, they would be like the public & find themselves have a tough time getting God to hear their prayers & accept their sacrifices. We can see that the right attitude or the correct disposition is so crucial in determining how God might accept our prayers. This tradition has been understood & accepted throughout the history of the Bible.

However, the right attitude or correct disposition is not the only factor to persuade God to listen to our prayers. Evidently God also has a soft spot in the divine heart for the poor, the weak, the oppressed, the orphan, & the widow. God seems to tune into their prayers & cry for help more than anyone else's. Today's First Reading tells us about that important fact as following, "...Though not unduly partial toward the weak, yet the Lord hears the cry of the oppressed. He is not deaf to the wail of the orphan, nor to the widow when she pours out her complaint... The prayer of the lowly pierces the clouds; it does not rest till it reaches its goal, nor will it withdraw till the Most High responds." So, the Book of Sirach seems to let us know that God favors the lowly & the underdog. Their prayers could pierce the clouds & get right to God for an answer. God picks out their prayers among the countless requests of the whole world & responds to them without delay. If we want God to listen to our prayer, then we need to show a desperate spirit of the poor, the weak, the oppressed, the orphan, or the widow. When God sees how desperate we are, God will pity us & answer our prayers.

We never run out of things to ask God to do for us. If we do, we could always pray for our families, friends, & everyone around us. Unfortunately, we might feel that we have been abandoned as most of our prayers do not often get answered the way we want. Or, sometimes we have to wait patiently for God to respond to our prayers. In case we have doubt about God's love & presence in our lives, St. Paul want to give us this encouragement in today's Second Reading: "...At the first hearing of my case in court, no one took my part. In fact, everyone abandoned me... But, the Lord stood by my side & gave me strength, so that through me the preaching task might be completed & all the nations might hear the gospel... The Lord will continue to rescue me from all attempts to do me harm & will bring me safe to His Heavenly Kingdom." So, St. Paul tells us that the Lord was always by his side to help him through the darkest moments of his life while everyone had abandoned him. He believes that the Lord would do the same for us in our desperate time. We should not lose heart if our prayers might not be heard yet.

My dear brothers and sisters, we are reminded in today's readings to have the right attitude & desperate spirit in our prayers if we want them to be answered. Once we do that, we would be rewarded more than just the answers for our prayers in the end. So, let me end my Homily here & leave with you what St. Paul believes that he would get in the end, "...I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. From now on, a merited crown awaits me; on that day the Lord will award it to me." I believe that we all would receive the same crown, besides the answers to our prayers, if we continue to put our faith in God.