

For the last couple of weeks our Gospels have contained issues of faith. It all begins when Jesus tells the disciples that they must forgive one another over and over, even seven times a day. To the disciples this task seems too difficult, nearly impossible and so they say, "Lord, increase our faith." Jesus responds to them, "If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you."

Jesus then continues his journey and comes upon ten lepers who call out to him, "Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!" Jesus does so and sends them off to the priests to have their cleansing confirmed. One of them a Samaritan comes back to give thanks to Jesus and Jesus says to him, "Stand up and go; your faith has saved you." Jesus then tells his disciples a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary. Following this parable Jesus expresses what is on his heart about faith by raising a question. "But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth."

In this section of the Gospel of Luke we can see the gospel writer directing the words of Jesus toward his own community. The community that Luke is addressing with his gospel is struggling with faith, they are struggling because the Lord has not yet returned. In the year 2019 we have adjusted to the fact that Jesus has not yet returned, maybe adjusted too well and have become complacent. But Luke's community thought the Lord would return soon, in their lifetime, but the days, weeks and years passed and the Lord had not returned. They were beginning to question, doubt and lose faith. When the disciples felt overwhelmed by what was being asked of them they asked for more faith. Luke's community is beginning to doubt because of the delay of the Lord's return and Luke uses one of Jesus's teaching on perseverance in prayer.

This message of perseverance is just as important today as the day Luke included it for his community. In a day when there are so many challenges to faith it is important to remember the importance of prayer. Prayer, regular and persistent prayer is essential for a life of faith. Faith is a relationship with Jesus and to develop and strengthen a relationship with Jesus we must be in conversation, we must pray and pray regularly.

The Church has always understood and encouraged a life of prayer. At the heart of this prayer is the Eucharist, our communal prayer in which we are nourished with the Body and Blood of Christ. The Church calls us to gather weekly to celebrate the Eucharist because of our need to be persistent in prayer and to be nourished as a community. The Eucharist is essential for our prayer life but it is not all. We need personal time with the Lord in which we give thanks and praise for the wonder of our God as well as ask and seek answers for our lives. It is important to spend time in reflection with Scripture not just to learn the stories but to apply them to our lives. Scripture is meant to help us live each and every day and to face the challenges of our lives. This prayer will be different for each of us, but it will involve community, scripture, and personal prayer.

The Church, by celebrating the Eucharist and by other means, such as the Divine Office also called the Liturgy of the Hours, is constantly engaged in praising the Lord and interceding for the salvation of the entire world. The main scriptural texts for the Divine Office are the Psalms, which were also the daily prayers of Jesus himself. The Liturgy of the Hours, is the official daily prayer of the Church, which priests and religious vow to pray every day.

The schedule of prayer for the Liturgy of the Hours pervades the entire day and night in order to sanctify the entire day to God. However, the two principal hours are Morning and Evening Prayer. In Morning Prayer, the church gives thanks to God for the rising sun symbolizing the promise of Christ's resurrection. In Evening Prayer, we place the work we have done into the merciful hands of God and give thanks for all the blessings God has done for us through the course of the day. One can choose to pray the Liturgy of the Hours by purchasing a "Breviary" which contains the official prayers of the Church. One can also use the themes of Morning and Evening Prayer to guide their own prayer life. Allowing our prayer to pervade our entire days is a wonderful way to be persistent and make prayer a regular part of our day. If you have any questions about Liturgy of the Hours or any other prayers please let me know.

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