

Faith Habits

Putting Prayer to Work

Recently, I was fortunate to spend a few hours with six other men discussing prayer. We all were very open and honest about how we spent time with Jesus, in prayer. The following is my personal take on that discussion.

Without prayer, there can be little action, but without action, there is little prayer. Are we pray-ers trying to act, or are we doers trying to pray? Each of us finds ourselves leaning one way or another. Let's explore ways to find some balance in our prayer.

I pray best during the liturgy, and when spending time praying during adoration or whenever I can find time to be completely alone and quiet. That is when it's easy to block out everything that is seen or heard outside of my conscious. I've learned that private prayer keeps me focused on whatever I am speaking to God about. I also remember that scripture shows us that Jesus always prayed before he acted! Jesus is a good example for us doers to follow. Pray before we try to accomplish anything. Pray for guidance, pray before you leave the house, pray to consecrate whatever you want to do, pray for understanding when views differ. Pray after you come home from work, when you are in a restless frame of mind, or if you are excited or disturbed. When we are restless, it's a sign of our human need for God. What better way to unwind and think clearly than to relax in God's hands? It is a good time to give thanks for what you have accomplished, and for those around you, and a time to rest in the warmth of God's love.

How many times have we said, "I'll pray for you"; "for the homeless"; "for the sick"; "for the hungry"; "for the lonely"; if we're not willing to roll up our sleeves and do whatever is necessary to be part of the Lord's answers to OUR prayers? Where is the action in our prayer? Ouch! I've fallen into the trap of using prayer as an escape, as a way of putting MY responsibilities on God's shoulders!

Our faith and our prayers call us into action. Each of us can do something. Does someone need an encouraging word? Can a few hours before the Blessed Sacrament be helpful? Can I respond to the needs of the food bank? Is my weekly offering where it should be? Is my attendance at the Sacraments fulfilling my spiritual needs? Am I using all my God given talents to the best of my ability, or am I always finding reasons not to participate. Are there programs here at St. Mary Faith Community that I could be helpful with? That is prayer in action!

If we are by inclination a prayer-er let's make seeking God's love part of our daily prayer. Listen to the Holy Spirit whisper in our heart: What need is tugging hardest at our heart? Ask and pray that Jesus helps us to serve that need, whether at home, work, or within our Faith Community.

Life is a spiral of cycles; daily, weekly, season, and yes, lifelong. Through them all, the balance between prayer and actions shift. That's the patter of our Catholic life!

When I was young, shared prayer was what we knew and acted upon; but as all of us improve on our spirituality, we must find quiet time daily to not only pray and hold a conversation with God, but we must act upon our prayers.

Jesus came into this world to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable. The moment we ease into comfort, the Lord goads us into action. As soon as we throw ourselves into action, God calls us back to repose. The balance between praying and doing is delicate indeed, and few of us will find a perfect balance. No matter-the Lord will not ever let us rest in either direction. Remember: Prayer prepares us for moving into action. Prayer that doesn't do that is empty. Action without prayer will soon thin out and leave us empty.

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