

29 Sunday in Ordinary Time
Luke 18:1-8 Perseverance in Prayer

5 seconds of intentional silence

For the last five seconds or so, most of you were sitting and looking at me, waiting for me to say something. You were listening even before there was something to hear.

I'm wondering, do we ever pray like that, just looking at God in adoration, or focusing on Him in our own minds and hearts, silently listening and waiting for Him to say something?

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells us about the necessity to pray, to pray always, to pray without becoming weary. How do we pray "always," and if we do, how do we pray always without becoming weary?

First, what is Prayer?

Cardinal Robert Sarah says, "Prayer, in the first place, is the work of the Holy Spirit, who prays in us, reshapes us interiorly, and plunges us into the depths of the One and Triune God.

St. Therese, the Little Flower, said, "Prayer is lifting up our hearts and minds to God.

The Catechism says, "Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God."

Words are not necessary, especially at first, in fact, we should be silent and let God love us.

There are many types of prayer: formal, informal, vocal, silent, liturgical and more. The highest form of personal prayer is contemplative prayer, often called spiritual marriage or spiritual union. Very few attain this level of prayer. Yet, listening prayer, silent prayer, is very similar - and we can all do it.

All of you who are Mothers and Fathers, I have a question for you.

- ★ Have you ever held your infant son or daughter and simply stared at your baby's face, and into their eyes and fell in love?
- ★ Mothers, even before your child is born, hadn't you already fallen in love with your baby from the first knowledge of your pregnancy?
- ★ Fathers, you, too, I'm sure, have fallen in love with your son or daughter before their birth.
- ★ But, Mothers, for you, isn't it something so intimate, so inexplicable, so beautiful.
- ★ A bond with your unborn child from the very beginning that is so strong, so personal, so intense, that it can't even be compared with the love you feel for others?
- ★ And, mothers, when your little baby is born, totally dependent on you, don't you look at your son or daughter in your arms, especially as you nurse them at your breast, and fall even more in love?
- ★ You don't have to speak, and your infant wouldn't even understand, or form words in their mind,
- ★ yet, they are falling in love with you, too.
- ★ Aren't these feelings, these feelings of love, just like prayer, beautiful, intimate prayer?
- ★ Two hearts and two minds united in mutual, intimate love.
- ★ Loving God's beautiful living creation
- ★ This is prayer.

This picture of Jesus and Mary shows Mary looking deeply at Jesus' face; she is loving Him.

There is a legend in the church that Jesus cried, five times, the first at His birth; but there is no explanation why.

- ★ On that first Christmas, I believe that Jesus was about to look into His Mother's eyes,
- ★ even though, as the 2nd Person of the Blessed Trinity, He has known her from all eternity,
- ★ Jesus is, now, going to see His Mother's face for the first time with His human eyes.
- ★ And, as human and Divine emotions of Love and joy fills Baby Jesus' eyes with tears.

- ★ Jesus looks up and sees His Mother, already looking lovingly at Him, and she has tears already flowing down her cheeks.
 - ★ Jesus, whose tiny human heart contains all the Love of God, overflows with love and tears.
 - ★ Jesus and His Mother are falling in love with each other, again, in a divine and a human way and
 - ★ no words are necessary;
 - ★ no words are adequate to express what is felt and shared.
- Is this not prayer? Is this not unitive prayer? Yet, no words are spoken.
With this form of prayer, would you ever become weary from it?

Can we pray this way, too?

Absolutely! We are drawn to this kind of prayer from the moment of our conception.

In silence, we listen. In silence, God speaks to us, in silence God loves us.

We should let God love us! We should let God love us first, it's only right,

★ after all, God Loved Us first.

★ God loved us, you and me, by name, from all eternity.

★ God knew us, He knew every second of our lives, every hair we would ever have - and then lose.

★ God knew all our comings and goings.

★ God loved us before He created the universe, almost 14 billion years ago.

★ Couldn't we say, couldn't we imagine, that God was carrying us in His Womb, from all eternity?

★ That God is intimately in Love with us from all eternity.

★ God loved each one of us already when He created our first parents, Adam and Eve.

★ God loved each one of us when He placed our sins upon His back in the Garden of Gethsemene where He sweat blood for us.

★ God loved us when He forgave our sins from the cross.

★ God love us when He gave us His own Blessed Mother, to be our Mother.

★ God loved us when He cooperated with our own parents and united our soul with our body.

★ Even now, God carries us in His womb, nurses us, lives in us and walks with us wherever we go.

We are so close to God - that it is as if we are God's thoughts, truly.

God knows us and thinks us into being from all eternity.

Try to imagine yourself as God's thoughts. And, He never stops thinking us into being. He gives His own thoughts, a body, an intellect and a free will. That is how close we are to God!

So, God loved us first!

When we begin to pray, it is only right that we be still, be silent, be in His presence and allow ourselves to be loved. Let Him talk first!

Let God look at us as Mary looked at Her Son, Jesus, after His birth.

To pray silently is to look at God, to listen to Him and to allow Him to love us.

This is not mere imagery; in truth, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit live in us in Trinitarian Communion. They are loving us every instant of our existence: past, present and future.

● To be silent and to listen, is to agree to be stripped of our preoccupations.

● To give ourselves to God, who is already present in us, is Prayer, wordless and humble prayer.

Prayer should not be a press conference where we rattle of all our needs.

God already knows our needs. He knows them better than we do. And, God wants to answers our prayers.

So be silent, be attentive, be listening - in order to hear the prayer of the Holy Spirit, which comes from within, which becomes our own prayer. Let the Spirit intercede in place of us.

● Yet, we must not turn away from God when we do have real problems that torment us!

- when we are experiencing the dark night of doubt, despair, hurt and need.
- Vocal prayer is not an extraordinary act but, we should allow God a bit of freedom within us.
- We have to be able to wait for him in silence, in abandonment, and in confidence,
- wait in the silence, like a child who turns his gaze, and his trust, completely toward God.

For example, when I was young, I suffered from severe asthma and chronic tonsillitis. I don't remember the first years, but the years between six and ten, I'll never forget. A severe attack was frequent and very debilitating and lasted for days. I had to struggle for air with every breath. Eating was undesirable because I had to chew with my mouth open while struggling for air; swallowing took away precious breathing time. Talking was limited to, maybe, two words during each exhale. But sleeping was the worst; I couldn't. My breathing wasn't automatic; it was conscious and forced; each inhalation was an effort.

I remembered one night when I was six or seven years old. I had been awake all night fighting for breath. I was sleepy and exhausted. My chest hurt from the effort it took.

I knew that God was everywhere and that He loved me. My grandmother taught me that. I began talking with Him because I knew He was listening, because God never sleeps. I remembered telling God, after a long conversation, that if He planned to take me with Him because of this sickness, that tonight would be okay; I was ready .

Then, I was quiet and waited. Shortly, I felt a warm loving hug; the feeling of peace was exquisite. Everything was all right. Then I relaxed and my breathing returned to normal. Soon I was fast asleep. I remembered what happened the next morning, and I was grateful, but it just seemed normal. If I would have called my mom or my grandma, they would have come and helped me, too. I didn't realize, then, how important this grace would be for me in my life. Because from that time on, my faith was no longer just believing stories about an all-knowing, all-present and loving God; now, it was my reality. God was there, He was all knowing, He was listening and He did love me.

Psalm 63 says:

On my bed I remember you.

*On you I muse through the night
for you have been my help.*

In the shadow of your wings I rejoice.

My soul clings to you,

your right hand holds me fast.

Yes, God is everywhere, God knows all things, God loves us from all eternity, God's heart overflows with love for us, we don't blink an eye without God already knowing it and God speaks to us in our silence. We are so close to God, the Holy Spirit dwells within us.

If you believe this, if you Love God, if you are forever grateful to Him and if you are always aware of the presence of God, then, you are praying always and you won't find this prayer wearisome at all!

Now, let us prepare to participate in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. This Liturgy opens heaven's doors and allows us to step beyond the walls of this world. This is an infinite gift from Our God, where Jesus will become physically present, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, on this altar. We who are blessed to receive Him in Holy Communion will become pregnant with His Presence, we can then go out and give birth to Our Lord in this world; a world which is so much in need of Him.

“Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, Amen.”