

## 29<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time C

One aspect of our faith is that we are called to pray for one another. As a priest, I get requests for prayers from many people. I usually pray for their requests at the altar during Mass just before the Eucharistic prayer. Some of you may have noticed that I don't begin the Eucharistic prayer immediately after the Sanctus is sung. I am praying for others at that time. Praying at this time in the Mass, not just for the priest but for everybody, is one of the most potent times to offer up our prayers. The Eucharistic prayer is the most powerful prayer that we have. The sacrifice at the altar is intimately connected to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. When Jesus offered His life on the cross for us, that was the most powerful sacrificial prayer of all. Our sacrifice at the altar during Mass is joined to that sacrificial prayer of Jesus on the cross.

This is one of reasons why we have the Prayers of the Faithful immediately before the Eucharistic prayer. Those prayers are lifted up along with the Eucharistic prayer. However, all of us should be offering up our own individual prayers at this time. Whenever I celebrate Mass at Holy Family School I pause just before the Eucharistic prayer and I remind the children that "now is the time to pray for someone that may need our prayers. We could pray for someone that is ill, or injured, or is hurting in some and they need our prayers." After saying this to the children, I pause for a few moments so that the children can pray for someone. All of those prayers go up to heaven along with the sacrifice at the altar.

I'm sure that everyone has noticed that the priest prays in the orans position, that is with uplifted hands. Orans is a Latin word that means "to pray" or "praying". The priest prays in this position at the opening prayer, Prayers of the Faithful, at the altar, and for the closing prayer. This is a position of supplication. We are humbly turning to God for help, praise, or thanksgiving.

What did we hear in the first reading? (Ex 17:8-13) While the Israelites were in battle with the Amalekites, Moses was on top of the hill praying for success. What was Moses' posture? Moses was praying with his hands held up. He was praying in the orans position. What took place historically in the first reading, we can easily see as an allegory for what we experience in the spiritual life. Moses was up on a hill praying for others. Moses is a prefigure of Jesus. Being up on a mountain always represents heaven, or being in the presence of the divine. The Israelites were down in the plain battling the Amalekites. This represents the spiritual battle between good and evil which takes place on earth. The Israelites represent us in our spiritual battle while here on earth. Jesus is in heaven praying for us. He is doing everything that He can to make sure that we win the battle.

However, Moses can also represent us. What happened when Moses got tired and let down his hands? Things started going poorly for the Israelites. When Moses had his hands up in prayer, things went well. When Moses got tired and dropped his hands, things went poorly. This does not represent Jesus in heaven getting tired of praying for us. No, Jesus never gets tired. This represents the fact that we get tired. We stop praying. Jesus urges us to pray always. Be persistent in prayer. When we get tired and stop praying, then we aren't turning to the Lord for help. We easily get distracted and things will start to go poorly for us in our spiritual life. The enemy slowly makes headway against us. We need to constantly be lifting up our hands, so to speak, in prayer asking for God's help.

It is important to notice also in the first reading how valuable it is to help one another in prayer. Moses was getting tired and dropped his hands. Aaron and Hur were there to assist Moses by holding his hands up. This is an example of intercessory prayer. We can assist each other by lifting each other in prayer. Somebody may be getting tired of fighting the battle. We can help them by lifting them up with our prayers. **It works!** Just knowing that other people are praying for you can help to lift up one's spirit, and encourage that person to keep going and not give up.

All of us can always be encouraged to know that Jesus prays for us – where he sits at the right hand of the Father and intercedes for His Church. Jesus is constantly fighting for us and encouraging us to turn to Him for help and strength. Jesus wants us to be persistent in prayer. Turn to Him in your need. Trust that He is there and will answer your prayers. Don't give up!

As we heard in our responsorial psalm. (Ps 121) "Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. We lift up our eyes to heaven; from where shall come our help? Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. The Lord is your guardian; he is beside you at your right hand. The Lord will guard you from all evil; he will guard your life. The Lord will guard your coming and your going. Blessed be the name of the Lord, both now and forever." Amen.