

Twentyninth Sunday of Ordinary Time

29th Sunday
October 20, 2019
Fr. Max Oliva, S.J.

Saint Ignatius of Loyola wanted his followers to be “contemplatives in action” Prayerful men who lived out their time of prayer in effective ministries. Many men and women today follow the spirituality of St. Ignatius in their daily life.

Our readings today focus on both prayer and action: “pray always without becoming weary,” Jesus tells us in the Gospel; “proclaim the word by being persistent, whether it is convenient or in convenient,” St. Paul urges, in the Second Reading.

An important feature of how we pray is our image of God. Is our image of a God that is stern and judging or merciful and loving? What was your image of God when you were a child? What is it today, if you are an adult? If it has changed, was there a special event or grace that changed your mind and heart?

II

There are many ways to pray:

Moses had a close relationship with God, as we hear in today’s First Reading. The Psalmist prays while out in nature. In the Second Reading, St. Paul urges his friend Timothy to use the scriptures for prayerful reflection, for they outline the path of salvation (our moral compass).

There are prayers of petition where we trust that our words do not fall on divine deaf ears!

Some like to pray the Rosary, reflecting on various themes related to our Blessed Mother. The Eucharist is a prime example of praying and acting. We listen to the Word and then when we leave Mass we act on it.

Another important thing to remember about praying: expect distractions. They come and they go. Sometimes the best thing to do is to laugh at them. If you are praying a passage from the Bible, just return to the passage when you realize you have fallen to a distraction.

A cute story about distractions comes from the book, “Stories for All Seasons,” by Oblate Father, Gerard Fuller:

“St. Bernard was riding on his horse one day, lost in prayer. He met a beggar on the road and engaged in conversation with him. The beggar asked Bernard what he was doing on the horse as he went along, and Bernard said he was praying.

“But I often have distractions in my prayer,” Bernard confessed.

“Oh well, I never have distractions when I pray,” the beggar said.

“That’s nice,” said St. Bernard. “I’ll give you this horse if you can say an ‘Our Father’ without once being distracted.”

“Oh, that’s easy,” the beggar said, and he began to pray, “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.....” The beggar paused. “Say, does the saddle come with the horse?”

The Lesson: when we pray, we should not lose heart if we are distracted.

III

“Lord, teach us how to pray.
Help us to be steadfast in our prayer
and diligent in preaching the word.
Deepen our faith and our trust in Your Faithfulness
We ask this in Jesus’ name.

AMEN.

Father Max Oliva, S.J.
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