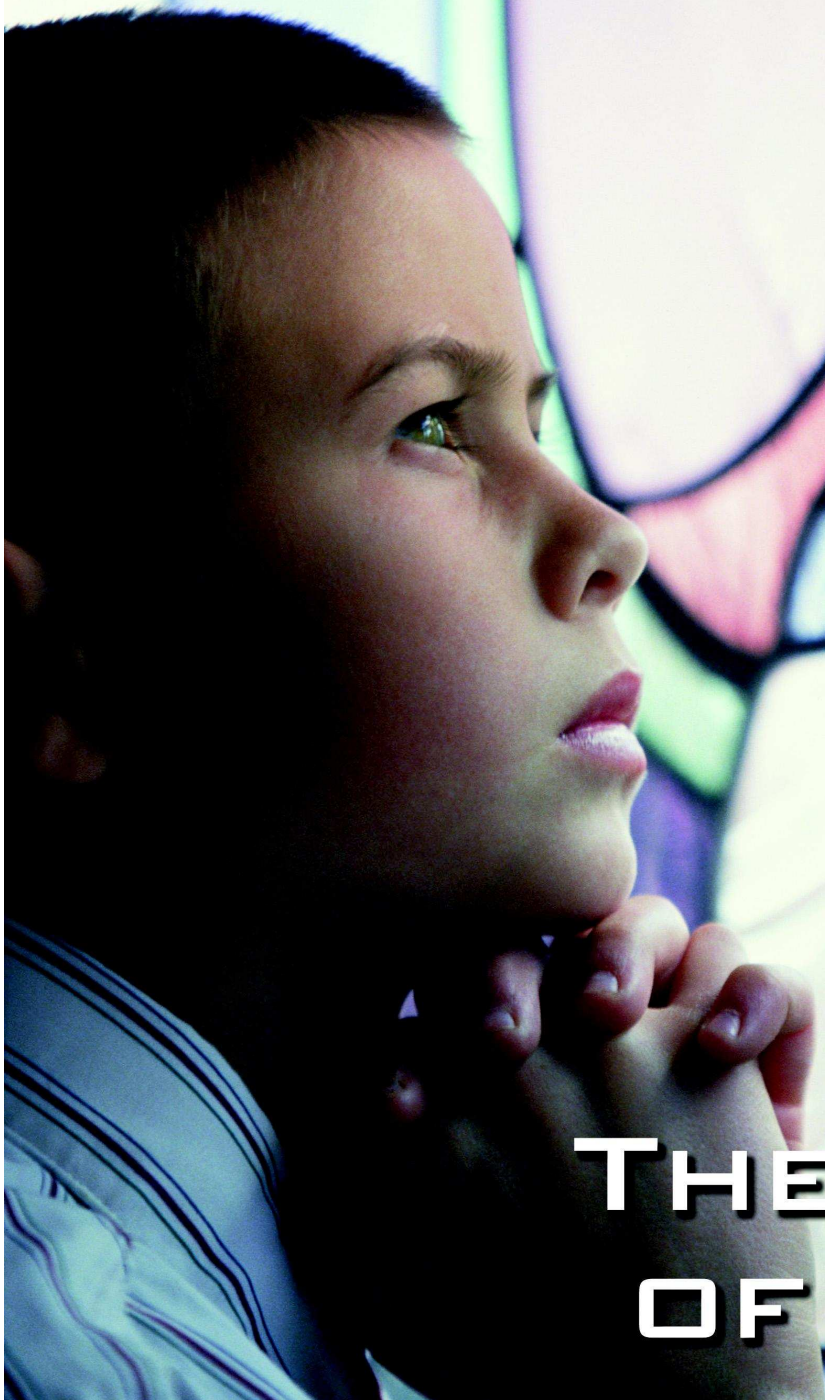


STEWARDSHIP

A FAITH JOURNEY

Stewardship of Prayer



THE POWER
OF PRAYER

The Sharing of God's most powerful yet comforting gift
The Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Stewardship of Prayer

“the power of prayer”

Prayer is God’s most POWERFUL yet COMFORTING gift He has given to each of us to share.

I read an article in the paper about prayer being reduced to no more than a comforting gesture with no real intention behind it. That really bothered me. I soul searched and reflected on it. This was wrong. Prayer is a deeply meaningful gift from God to share with others, not a statement made in passing.

From this article the Stewardship team created a Prayer Card which is free at the back of the church. Pick up one or more packets and pass them on. If you offer to pray for someone, write it down and do it. Show the person you are writing it down and offer them a blank prayer card (or as many as needed). If someone offers to pray for you or one of your loved ones, write the name on one of the cards and pass it to them. Please take as many Prayer Card Packets as you want. They are a gift from the Stewardship team.

These are the four most asked questions about prayer. We hope they will be insightful to you.

How do I pray?

It is a matter of the heart. When you pray to God, pray from your inner most heart and speak directly to Him. Just talk to God, He will listen.

When do I pray?

EVERYDAY. When you wake up in the morning just say thank you to the Lord. Pray over each meal thanking

the Lord for that meal, friends and family. Pray when you drive to work, cut the grass, take a walk, go to the gym or beach. Pray any time God comes to your mind. Lastly, pray before you go to bed at night. Just say “Thank you Lord.”

Who do I pray for?

Let your heart be your guide. Yourself, your family , your friends, someone you read about who had trauma in their life, a fellow parishioner. Remember our leaders in the church and our government in your prayers. Write each one down in your prayer card with the prayer intention. Keep it with you and pray daily. As you start to pray each day, pray for yourself; strength to overcome temptation, addiction, guidance for spiritual strength, help with a problem or marriage. God wants your prayers, He will hear you.

Does God really hear and answer prayers?

We can tell you absolutely, however, you be the judge. Start your prayer cards with your special intentions and highlight them as they are answered, either Yes or No. Then reflect on them.

Remember , pray from your heart and soul as an unselfish act of deep meaning. As it states in the Bible “The prayers of a righteous man [or woman] are answered.”

We, the members of the Stewardship team are excited to share with you just a small insight to the Power of Prayer.

The Serenity Prayer

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.

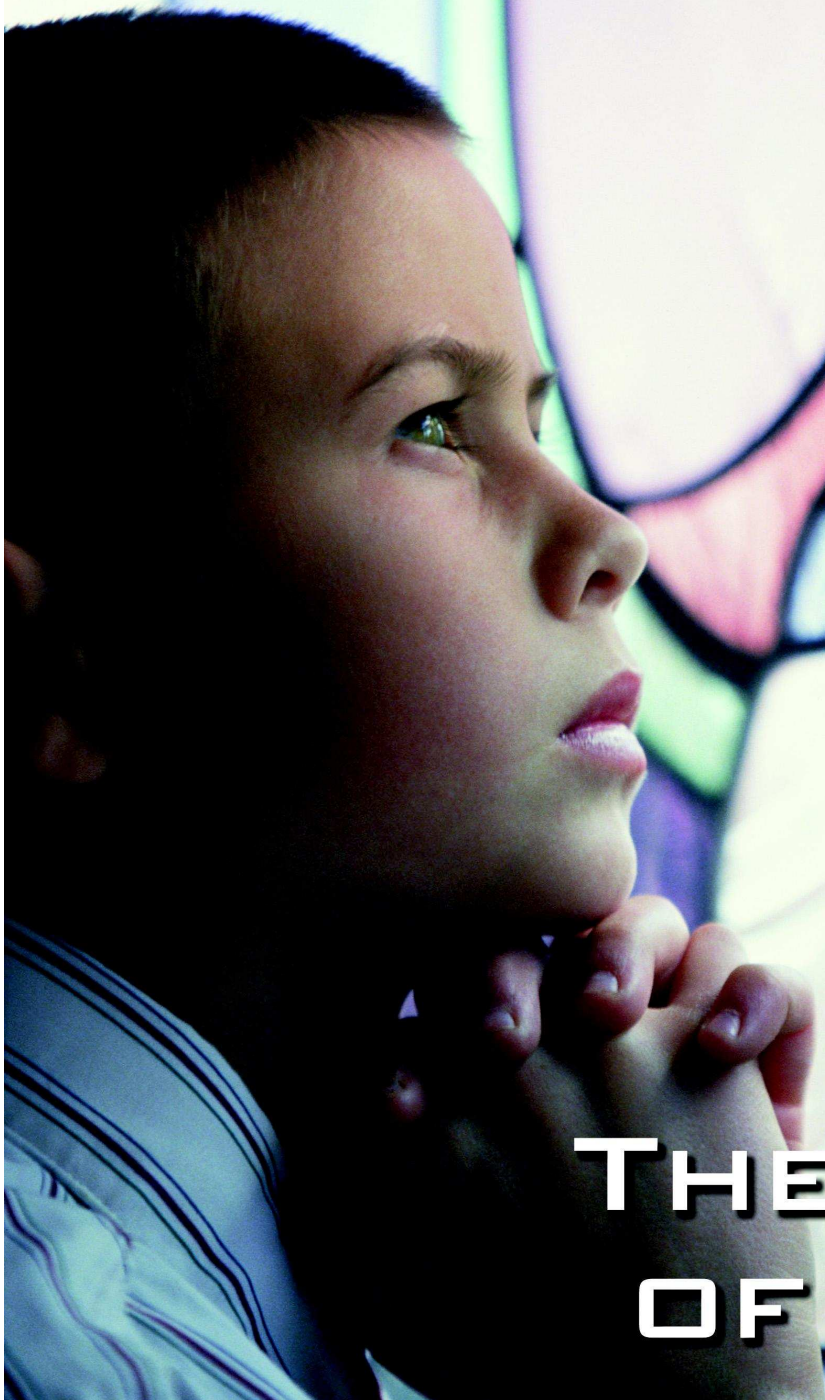
Living one day at a time; Enjoying one moment at a time; Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;

Taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it; Trusting that He will make all things right if I surrender to His Will; That I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with Him Forever in the next. Amen.

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“An Answered Prayer”

On an icy cold morning in January 1999, our daughter died. I came upon the accident as the ambulance was pulling away. I knew the car that was pinned around the tree. I knew my daughter had died. I called my wife, as my tears flowed, and struggled to drive the short three minutes back to our home.

Our lives had changed forever. We questioned. Why? We couldn't believe it had really happened. Was it reality? It was. We picked up our children at school and prayed. Friends, our priest, relatives all began arriving at our home. Again the question, why? The question haunted us throughout our little sleep, as we had to make all the arrangements to bury our daughter. She was so young with life's total glory ahead of her, graduation from college was only four months away. Why? We could not understand.

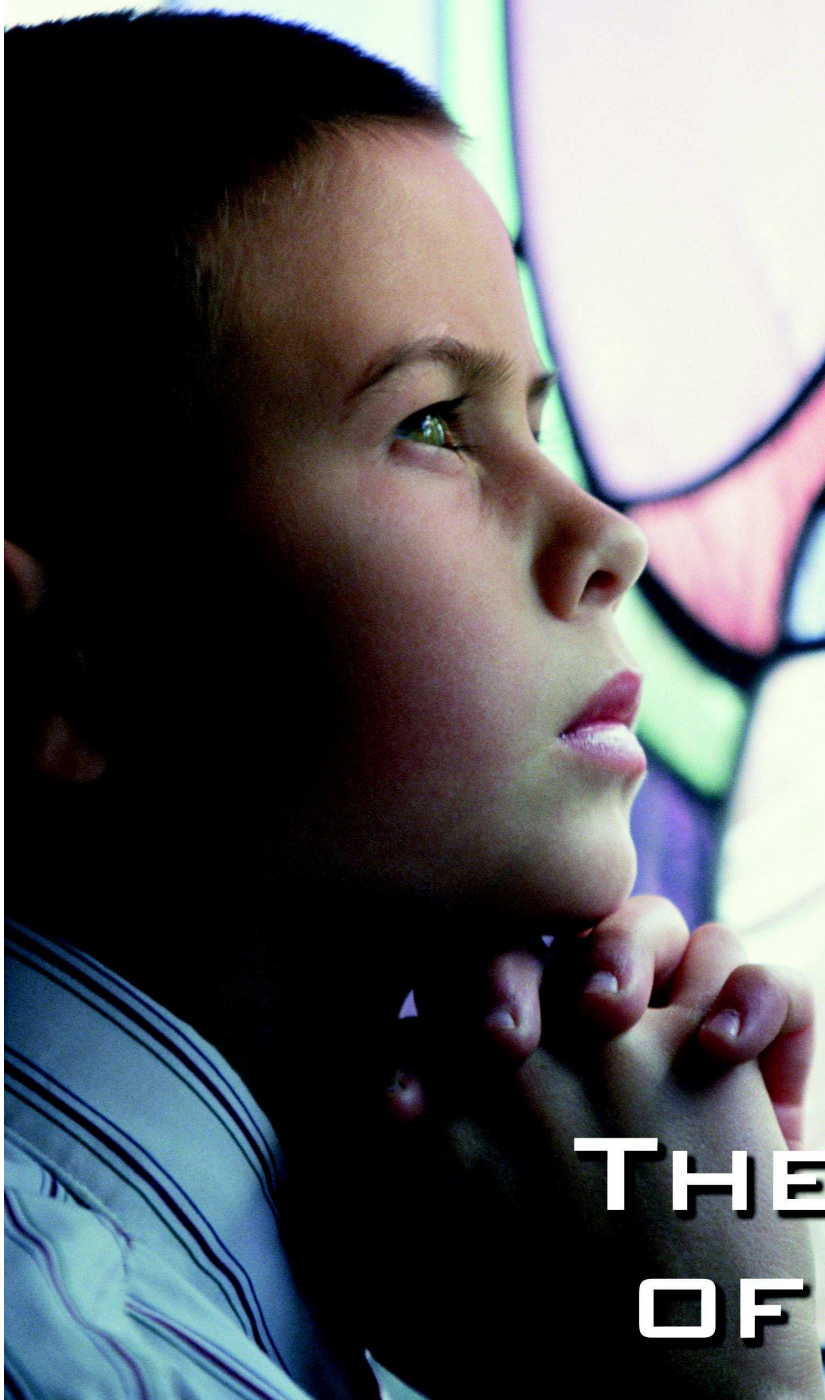
Our daughter was only in our lives a short 10 years. She was our first adopted child and came to us at the age of 12. Her mother was dying from a brain tumor and asked our church, St. Peter and the community to find a kind loving family for her daughter, before she died. She chose us, to entrust her most precious life's treasure with. We prayed and prayed for God to help us understand. Why? In the midst of picking the final clothes our daughter would wear, the casket, a gravesite, writing an obituary, in the midst of all this great tragedy, it came to us. In a whisper, in a thought, a warm feeling could be felt. We were being guided, moved, spoken to, God had answered our prayers.

Out of our daughter's death there could be life. People had sent us money, money to be donated to a cause that honored our daughter's life. Brittany's aspirations were to help the needy throughout the world, especially children without families. She had once said, “every child needs the love of a family”. We listened to our hearts, and Brittany's Hope Foundation was born. Out of a tragic death could come life to special children waiting throughout the world, through the promise of adoption.

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I can remember the day like it was yesterday. My father, who is a CPA, had just finished another tax season and looking forward to a much needed rest but unfortunately that was not going to happen.

It was Monday, April 21st and I was heading to the office to do some quarterly returns when the phone rang. It was my brother calling to say my father had a stroke and was being rushed to the hospital by ambulance. I immediately dropped everything and rushed to the hospital, some two hours away. I think I made it in record time to the emergency room where my brother and sister were already there with my father. My father looked so frail and could not communicate well with us. His speech was slurred, his right side was paralyzed, and he was getting frustrated with not being able to communicate properly. Finally, we were able to get him admitted into a hospital room. The doctors came to see us and said that he indeed had suffered a stroke. They said that they were not sure of the recovery time. It could take months before he would be able to walk and talk like before. When we went to see him in his room, he was very agitated. He could not tell us what he was feeling without us trying to fill in the blanks because the words were not coming to him. There was accounting work that needed to be completed that had him worked up but most of all, he was upset knowing that he had suffered a severe stroke and that my daughter's First Holy Communion was only 13 days away. We told him not to worry about anything; God would take care of him.

Each day of this first week, I would go and visit with him. He was making some progress with his speech but it was still very difficult to understand him and extremely frustrating for my family as well as for my father when he was trying to tell us something. By Thursday, they had assembled a team of physical therapists to help him with his speech, writing and walking. They were able to get him out of bed and to stand but only for a few seconds. I hated seeing him this way. My father has always been an independent man with beautiful handwriting and eloquent speech but now he was like a baby learning how to read and write and speak. It was extremely depressing. In the back of his mind, and also on my mind, was the First Holy Communion that was coming up faster than we hoped at this point. He told me that he was very upset but he felt that he would not be able to be present at the Communion. I had faith that God would help us out and find an answer. This day was already going to be difficult not having my mother there with us as she had passed away prior to this but now, possibly not having my father there was more than we were able to handle. We didn't want him to see how upset we were so we just played the whole thing down and told him that we would videotape the service and then come to the hospital after it was finished so he could see my daughter in the beautiful dress that he had bought her to wear.

On Friday, I decided to go back home. I felt terrible leaving him but my children needed me and I had to prepare for next week. I spoke to my father each day by phone, interjecting the thoughts when he could not find the correct words to use. Some days were better than others for him. His speech was being to improve but if he was thinking faster than he could speak, than the words just got all jumbled again. My daughter and I kept praying that a miracle would happen. Even though I knew God was listening to our prayers, I still wasn't sure if he could speed up the process. I don't think that my daughter ever

doubted God's power. She KNEW God would grant her a miracle because that is what God does best. She really wanted her Grandfather to be a part of her "big day" and somehow felt confident that he would be. On Thursday, just two days before First Communion, I received a call from the hospital saying my father was going to be released into our care the next day because there was nothing more the hospital could do for him. I didn't tell my daughter because I was not sure of the condition my father would be in when I arrived there. The hospital staff had been preparing us the week before that he might need to go into a nursing home to get extensive rehab. I left early Friday morning from my home and traveled those two hours to the hospital where my Father was. My sister and I arrived at the hospital together and found our father sitting in a wheel chair. The physical therapist asked us which sister lived in Hershey and I said that it was me. She said that my father made great progress because all he was concerned about was getting to his granddaughter's First Communion.

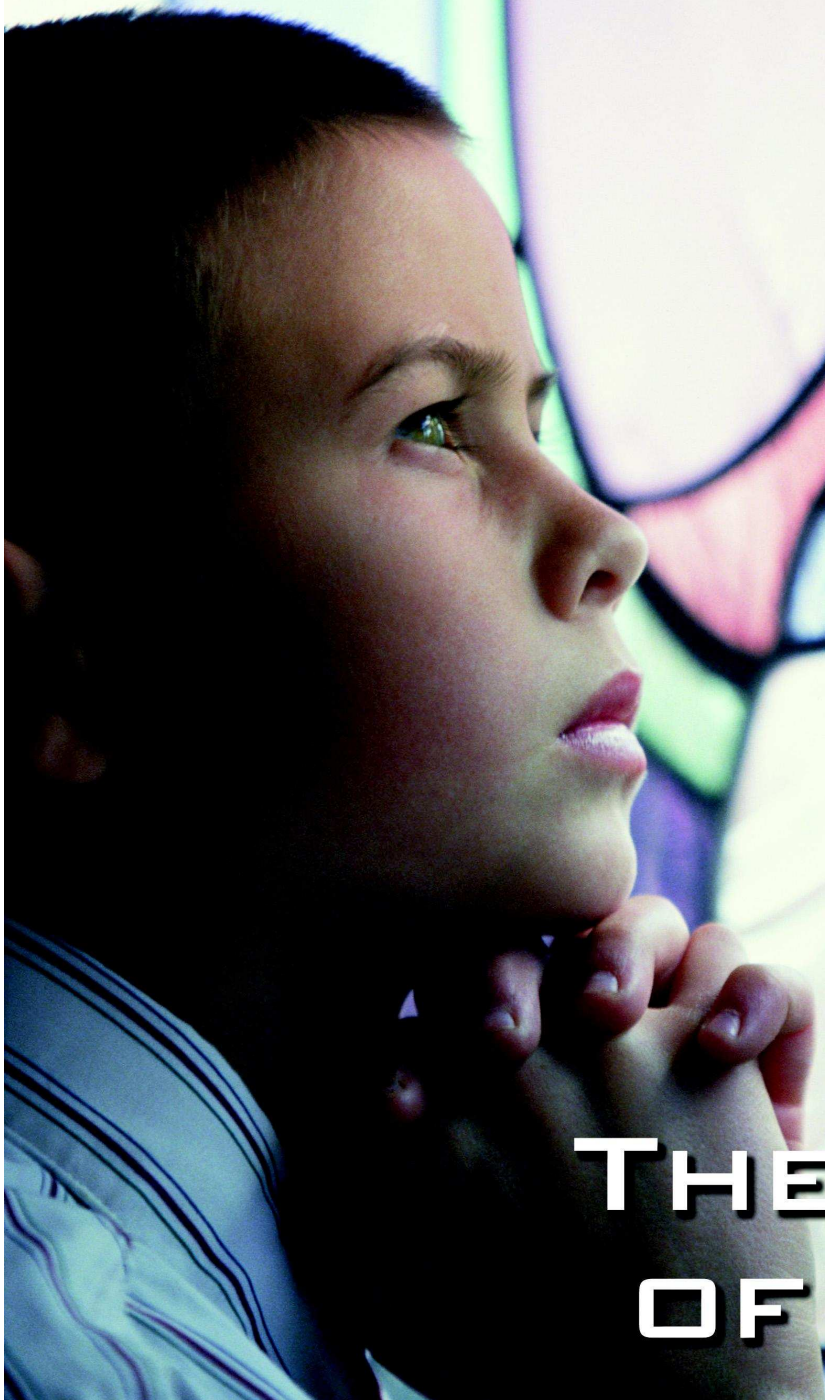
The next thing I knew, my father was up and out of the chair and walking around the room with little, if any, support. He was climbing up the stairs and back down again and moving at a semi-normal pace. I could not believe my eyes, it truly was a miracle. God had listened to our prayers, especially the prayers of a child, and sent angels to watch over his recovery, pushing him along in order to help my father get better in time to attend the First Communion. The staff at the hospital could not believe the wonderful progress he had made in just one week's time. They had never seen a stroke victim, as bad as my father was, recovering so quickly. I truly believe it was God's Will that Dad be present at my daughter's Communion and it was through that Will that Dad found his determination to get well and be with us. I bowed my head and thanked God for this blessed gift. We left the hospital and I took my father home with me. He stayed at home while I went to school to pick up my daughter. I told her that I had a surprise for her when we got home. She ran in and asked what the surprise was. I told her that it was hidden in the living room. She ran out into the other room to find my father standing there waiting for her. She looked at my dad, looked at me and then back at my dad. She hugged him very tightly and began to cry. She said it was the best present she could have ever received. She turned to me and said that it was a miracle that God let her Grandfather come to her First Communion. She also told me that she KNEW God would listen to her prayers especially since Nanny could not be with us, she was SURE God would have her Grandfather with us. I told her that God does work miracles and that this was the best miracle for all of us to see – the prayers of a child being answered!

The next day was the First Communion. We all went as a family. My daughter was beaming from ear to ear and so was her Grandfather. Love was in the air for all of us because we knew God's angels who had helped my Dad throughout his therapy were smiling down on us knowing how truly precious life is and that nothing can be taken for granted. Only God can work miracles and sometimes we are fortunate enough to be able to witness His wonderful works. I will always be grateful for the joy my family received on that day. It is something none of us will ever forget; nor will we ever forget the power of prayer in our lives. Prayer can truly make a difference in all of our lives.

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Sometimes God, in His divine plan, allows us to personally experience His grace and answer to our prayer. This is one such story that happened to a person I work with. My prayers are that this personal testimony will help others' hearts open to the reality that God hears and answers ALL prayer from the heart in His time and for His purpose; to draw us closer to Him.

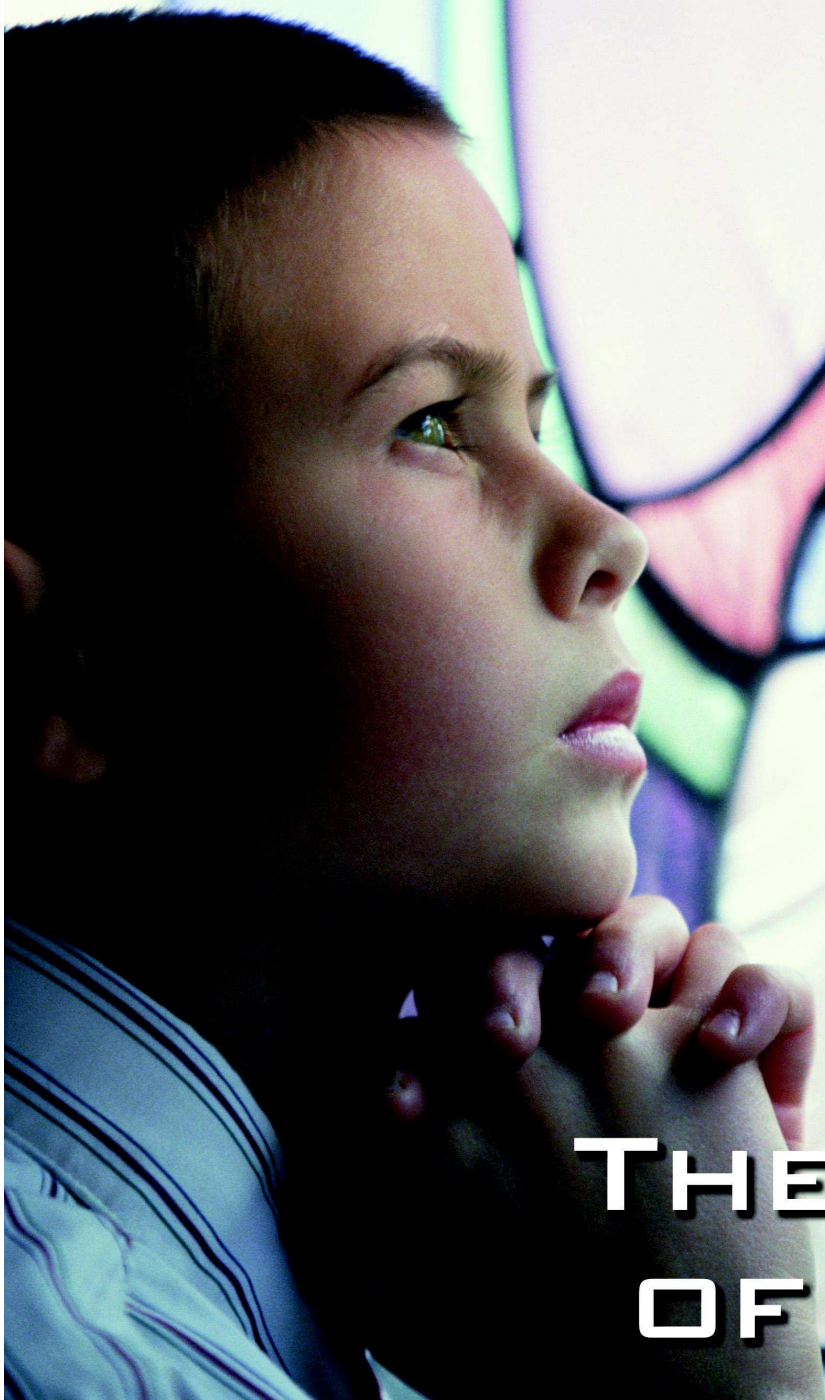
I was sitting on my back porch reading a book, I had just been given at work, titled *Serving two Masters*. This book is a required reading for the entire management team at our company as we are striving to grow into a God Honoring company. As I was reading, a feeling came over me that I needed to pray for my husband to protect him from bodily harm. I had never really had this type of a feeling before however it was strong enough that I chose to say a prayer. I went back to reading. All of a sudden, I was overwhelmed by the urgent need to pray for my husband; I had never prayed so reverently before, so continuously, or so truly heartfelt. I can not explain the feeling except to say I knew God was speaking to me, directly, and guiding me to pray for bodily protection of my husband. If I did not pray, I knew serious injury would happen to him.

I have never done this before, but I prayed and prayed and prayed from my heart with everything that was in me. Fifteen minutes later my husband who had been power washing the house, poured gas into the power washer which was hot. A ball of flames erupted which looked like it consumed the side of the house as well as most of him. He threw the gas can and ran from the house. My husband did not have one scratch on him our home was not burned. God not only answered my prayers, He allowed me to take part in and showed me His love, power, and grace. My life is changed forever as God, my Father, allowed me to personally experience Him.

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Have you ever heard others talk about how easy it is for them to pray? How some people can pray for extended periods, how they could make up their own conversational prayers, and furthermore, how they “listen” too? I felt inferior. I used to feel that I did not have enough time to pray, and besides, I never heard anything! As a result, my pray life was poor. Each night, I managed an Our Father and a Hail Mary and that was about it.

Then someone in my family had a health scare. I decided to shape up my prayer life, and I will admit, at first it was strictly out of fear. I said a rosary a day during that uncertain time. The health scare was just that, a scare. There was no serious illness. Then my prayers turned into prayers of gratitude. That is when it hit me, everyday is a reason for gratitude and thus a reason to set aside time to pray! Why did I wait until I “needed” something?

That was over 12 years ago and I still pray several times a day. Like I said, the rosary is how I got started. I started by praying two decades on the way to work, two on the way home, and the last one before going to sleep. Some days if I needed an extra push, I played a Rosary CD to pray along with. I have also found help in other resources. The small books we receive at our parish missions are wonderful because they contain prayers for all occasions. You can also find similar books in any Catholic shop or online. You can pick a bible verse each day and meditate on it. Eventually, once prayer becomes a part of your daily life, spontaneous, “from the heart prayer” can and will follow. You will find what works for you, I promise!

Once you make the time to pray, it becomes SO much easier. There is always someone to pray for, something to be thankful for, and God is always there, worthy of our praise. Do not be discouraged if you get distracted. This is problem I have. I once heard a speaker on prayer who gave us encouragement. She said that even if your mind strays, and comes back to prayer, that’s NOT a failure, but a special moment, precisely because you come back to prayer!

Here is a summary of prayer that I saw recently, and it really spoke to me:

Happy moments, praise God.

Difficult moments, seek God.

Quiet moments, worship God.

Painful moments, trust God.

Every moment, thank God!

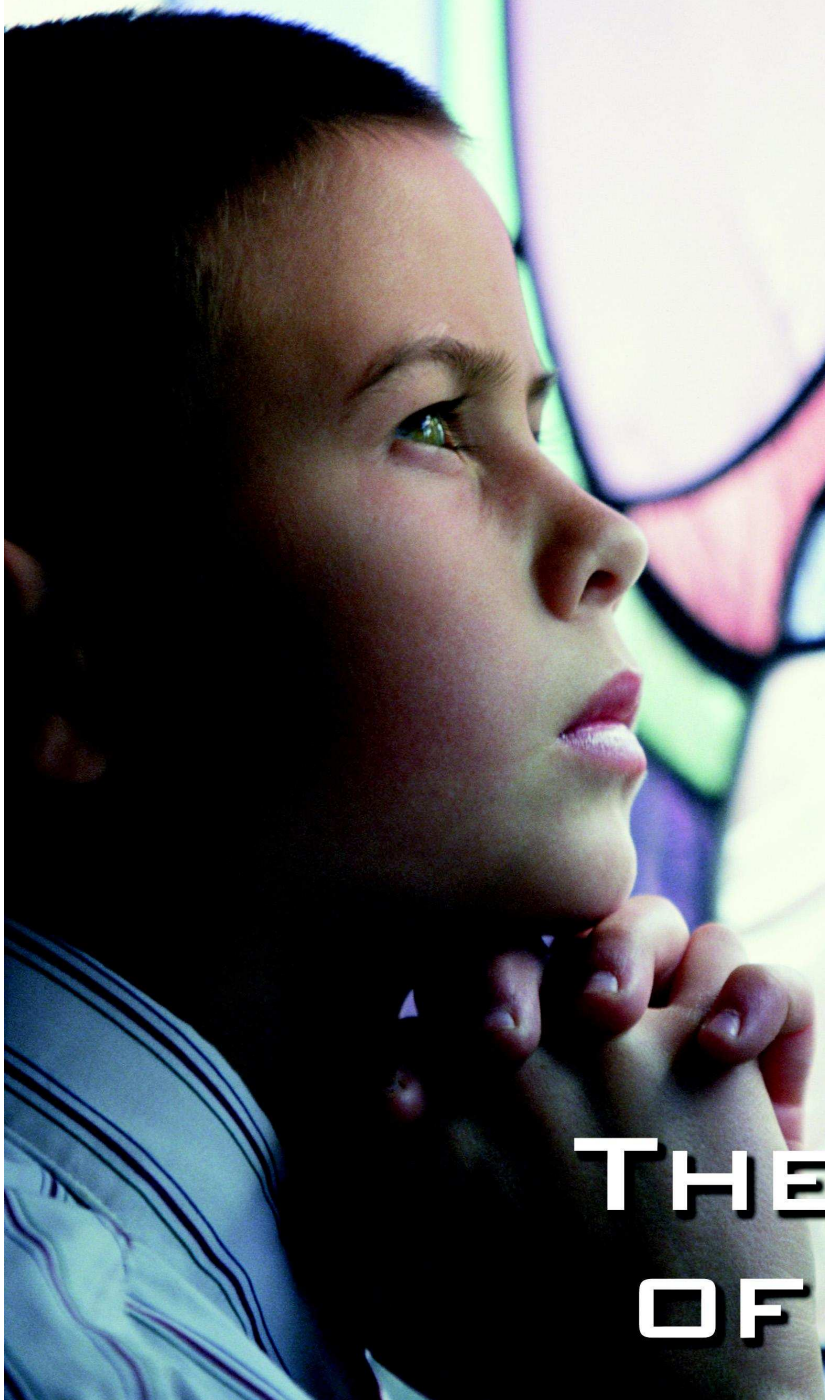
“Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.” 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

A St. Peter Parishioner

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Many things in life are easy to talk about, but difficult to do. If you want to lose weight, you must burn up more calories than you consume. To have better finances, you must spend less money than you ring in. These are simple in theory yet seem oh so difficult in practice. After all, it's not easy to pass up that cheesecake and replace it with a 2 mile walk!

Our spiritual life is similar. If we reduce our entire Christian experience down to the lowest common denominator, the one thing that permeates all other aspects of being a follower of Christ, it is prayer. Want to resist temptation? Pray. Unsure of the future of your finances? Pray. Considering another child? Pray. Feeling the tug to get involved with a ministry? Pray. Don't know what to do about that rascal of a cousin of yours? Pray.

It is quite simple. Yet many times we forget. We try to find “other ways” to solve these problems. The old adage is “work less if everything depends on God. Pray as if everything depends on you.” Usually we have it backwards. We work, toil, fret, worry, and try to work things out on our own, forgetting the one thing we should be doing when faced with any decision or difficult situation. Pray.

A teenager once asked “did Jesus pray?” A fair question. The answer is a resounding YES! Look at the Gospels. He prayed in the desert before beginning his ministry. He prayed before selecting the apostles. He prayed for Peter to be strengthened. He prayed in the garden. God made Man turned to prayer for guidance and for strength. He is our example.

Prayer need not be complicated. Our Catholic faith is rich in beautiful prayers. These are very helpful when circumstances make so that we are unable to find our own words. An “Our Father” said earnestly for a friend or the Prayer of St. Michael spoken in a time of fear is powerful...and they work. We must remember to trust. We must remember to rely on God. He promised to take care of us and guide us. He promised to provide what we need – not necessarily what we want. He said he would never leave us.

I believe he meant it.

In my own life I can look back and see the “worst” times were when I drifted away from God by drifting away from prayer. The times when I went at it all alone. The biggest successes and joys were attached to periods of prayer. The best decisions were ones made prayerfully.

As a child, my family did not pray together. Prayer was left for Mass (when we attended three times a year) or for Catholic School. As a parent myself, I pray with my children every day. I pray for my children every day as well! The cool part – they pray for me too! The best gift we can give our kids is the gift of prayer.

In the Sound of Music a young Maria is asked by the Mother Superior “what is the purpose of life?” She responds “to find the will of God and to follow it wholeheartedly.” A wise answer. But how do we find the will of God and then have the strength to follow it “wholeheartedly?” You guessed it. Prayer.

We all know it. Now we need to follow the advice of that big sneaker company:

Just do it!

A Parishioner