

Called to Pray

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As a young girl, I was taught me to set aside prayer time for “others”. My prayer life over the years had automatically interwoven this so called “other” factor. In the year 2005, a close parish friend asked me to pray fervently for her doctor friend, a cardiologist from a neighboring suburb who was afflicted with blood cancer. It was a bolt from the blue for her. Without even noting down the name of the doctor, I started praying for him in right earnest. I stormed heaven so to say. Two years later, I was told that he was completely cured. I thanked my Lord Jesus for the same and thought that the matter had ended there. Now, when my dad was battling in the ICU, two doctors, one, a cardiologist stepped in and took charge. I was amazed at his spiritual leanings, putting God before him in all that was unfolding in the area of healing. While we were nearing the end of our hospital stay, I got into a conversation with him and out of a sense of curiosity, asked him if by any chance he knew a cardiologist who was struck down with cancer and was healed miraculously, since he too was from the same suburb and was a cardiologist himself. I shared the fact that I had prayed for that doctor, hearing about his illness. Suddenly, I noticed tears in my doctor’s eyes. While I kept wondering, how my conversation had upset him, he unleashed a surprise on me. He took my hands as a gesture of thanks and told me, “ I am the same doctor that you prayed for....Today God has sent me as an instrument to treat your Dad.....if anything has healed your father, then it is not my medicine...rather..... your God !!”. There was little that I could do than to fall on my knees and glorify, praise and thank Jesus, through whom I had pleaded this case.

The Models of Intercessors

Yes, my dear reader, this is fact and not fiction. When we witness the season of autumn in our lives, we must fall back on friends and benefactors who can plead our case with Jesus. As human as we are, there are times when we are ravaged by problems that make us too weak to pray for ourselves. There are several instances in the Bible where people have stood in the gap, pleading for their near and loved ones. In the Old Testament we read about Abraham putting

aside his wants and pleading with God for the well-being of the people of Sodom (Gen 18: 16-33). Moses too prayed with a sense of urgency and boldness. Pharaoh requests him to pray for him, “Pharaoh said, ‘I will let you go to offer sacrifices to the LORD your God in the desert, but you must not go very far. Now pray for me’” (Ex 8:28). Moses petitioned God on behalf of the Hebrew people: “Then Moses cried out to the LORD...” (Ex 15:25). We see Moses interceding on behalf of others throughout his life. We see mediators in the person of David, Samuel, Hezekiah, Elijah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel in the Old Testament.

Jesus and Mary: The Mighty Intercessors

More effectively we can turn to the New Testament to look for instances where we see Jesus yielding to the requests of many. At the Wedding of Cana, Our Blessed Mother pleads on behalf of the family when the wine is over. Surely, our Lord performs his first miracle as a gesture of submission. In John 11:22, we see a highly despondent Martha telling Jesus “And even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.” She was confident that her requests to the Son of God would not go waste and that her brother Lazarus would walk out of the tomb. And we see Lazarus was raised up by Jesus from the tomb. If Jesus could never turn down the requests of those whom he loved then, surely he will listen to the prayers of all of us, for whom, he has purchased eternal life through his precious blood.

Indeed, Jesus is the greatest Intercessor of all times. Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb stood between the Father and sinful man for death was the only price that could be paid for sin. As St. Paul says “For there is one God, and one mediator (intercessor) between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5). “Who is to condemn? Is it Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us?” (Rom 8:34). “Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25).

As in the Old testament, we need not bring sacrificial animal offering as a gesture of appeasement, rather we can hold on to Jesus, "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of

grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need”(Heb 4:14-16).

The Apostles

The Apostles ,Peter and Paul too were both intercessors and recipients of intercessory prayer. St Paul prayed for the believers of the Church as reflected in Philippians 1: 9-11, "And this is my prayer: that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ - for the glory and praise of God". While Peter was imprisoned ... "the church prayed fervently to God for him" (Acts 12:5).

Pray for all Seasons and Reasons

Are we then called to pray for others? Yes, indeed we are called pray for all seasons and reasons. “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. This is right and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:1-5).

The Word of God beckons us to pray for people from all walks of life: all in authority (1 Tim 2:2); ministers (Phil 1:19); the Church (Ps 122:6); friends (Job 42:8); fellow countrymen (Rom 10:1); the sick (Jas 5:14); enemies (Jer 29:7); those who persecute us (Mt 5:44); those who forsake us (2 Tim 4:16); and all men (1 Tim 2:1).

While we learn to pray for others, we are raised to a greater spiritual understanding of the Will of God. True intercessory prayer lays focus on the fulfillment of God’s will in our lives and those of others, whether it suits us or not. We seek the glory of God and not our own. Let us then join our hands in prayer not just for our own needs but also for the needs of others who are too weak to pray at this point of time.

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