

From the PASTOR'S DESK

All Times and Seasons

In today's Gospel, Jesus is facing an increasing degree of opposition and resistance, which will lead to the crucifixion. Nevertheless, He is in constant intimate dialogue with His Father throughout it all. Again and again, we see Him dedicating time to prayer, even leaving His disciples and the crowds to be alone with His Father.

Sometimes, people are drawn to prayer during tough times. They feel their vulnerability, a need for help. Such a time can provoke an increase in prayer, and the effect can be a long-lasting routine. More often, fervor cools when things calm down. Life can continue to be tough, and people become worn out, or things get better and the need for God seems less. However, some people find praying easier when things are going smoothly. They are less agitated, more relaxed. They are able to be still and raise their minds and hearts to God without distraction.

Regardless of our personal tendencies, it's important to examine the way Jesus seems to burst into prayer so often. This behavior underlines the need for an ongoing, sustained personal relationship with God no matter whether times are good or bad. The tough times draw our attention to our need for prayer, while the good times remind us that in God is to be found a peace that surpasses all understanding.

Jesus' prayer in today's reading is extraordinary. In the previous passage, He has been the target of insults and accusations. While contending with that, He steps back to speak to His Father. Despite the highly elevated nature of His words, He brings His situation and challenges into the prayers. The prayer is elevated but still concerned with the things of this world.

All of us deeply need prayer. If life is going well, and we are strong, confident, and at ease with the world, we are blessed, but we still need to realize that prayer isn't optional. If life is tough, prayer is not just about asking God for help with our difficulties, it's about sharing what we are going through with the God who loves us beyond all telling.

Prayer has many components and comes in different forms. Regardless of variation, prayer is about our relationship with the One who creates us, sustains us, knows us better than we know ourselves, and saves us, loves us, and is our most tender and dear friend. Friendship is precious, and so prayer is precious. Just as friends are not only for good times or difficult times, prayer, too, is for all times and all seasons.

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