

# AUGUST 6, 2023: TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD



The first reading at Mass the other day was from the Book of Exodus. It was about Moses interceding for the people of Israel with God. I spoke in my homily about our responsibility to be—like Moses—intercessors for the needs of others. One of the seven spiritual works of mercy is to pray for the living and the dead, and I honestly believe that these prayers should be an important part of everyone's daily prayer life.

I am often asked: what is the point or purpose of praying for others? If God knows what we need—and He does—and if God already can do what is necessary without us—which He can—why does God want us to pray for the needs of others? The answer: God desires that his people be part of his work of salvation. We are an outward expression of God's grace working in the world. Jesus made it clear in Matthew 25 that whatever we do for the least of his brothers and sisters, we do for Him. When we pray for others, we are allowing God's compassion and mercy to flow through us. We are allowing God to show his care and concern for others through our care and concern.

Often, I am asked to pray for others. I am truly humbled when people ask me to pray for them or those they love. But, at the same time, I want to remind them that my prayers are no more efficacious than their prayers. God hears our prayers equally. My being ordained a priest does not make me holier or more special in God's eyes. Each one of us is called to be that instrument of prayer empowered by the Holy Spirit to give voice to the needs that exist.

Ultimately, there is truly only one mediator between God and humanity and that is Jesus. When we pray for others, we are uniting ourselves with Christ. We are continuing Christ's mission in the world. And this is possible because of our baptism. We are temples of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us and who makes prayer possible. Furthermore, we are united with Christ in his death, resurrection and ascension—the means of our salvation. Our prayer for others is a way that we help others to encounter God's saving will for them. As we express our care and support, others will come to recognize the Love that is the foundation of our actions. It becomes an opportunity for them to recognize God's love working through our actions. They are not alone—they are not forgotten—they are important.

As we pray for others, it is important to remember that we are not trying to change God's mind about what is going to happen in the person's life. God already knows what is best for him or her. We may believe we know what is best, but if it contradicts God's will for the person, then we are wrong. Rather, our prayer is intended to help the person be open to God's presence in his or her life. I once had a conversation with a person who asked me to pray for them to get the job they were interviewing for. I responded that I would pray that God's will be done. They said "No—I want you to pray that I get the job." I answered that I can only ask that God's will be done. They did not get the job, but shortly after that they got something far better. Intercessory prayer is always about trusting in the Lord.

Each day, as I go through my list of people who have asked me to pray for them, I name all of them. I will admit that it can take a bit of time to recite all the names, but I always finish with the following prayer. It helps me to give focus to what it is that I want people to experience.

**Father of goodness and love, hear our prayers for the sick members of our community and for all who are in need and all who serve them. Amid mental and physical suffering, may they find consolation in your healing presence. Show your mercy as you close wounds, cure illness, make broken bodies whole, and free downcast spirits. May these special people find lasting health and deliverance, and so we join together in thanking you for all your gifts. We ask this through the Lord Jesus who healed those who believed. Amen.**

Praying for others is both necessary and important. It is a concrete sign of God acting in the world. We may not always get the answer we want when we intercede for others, but in faith we know our God will always respond. We must simply humble ourselves and allow God's will to be done in all things.