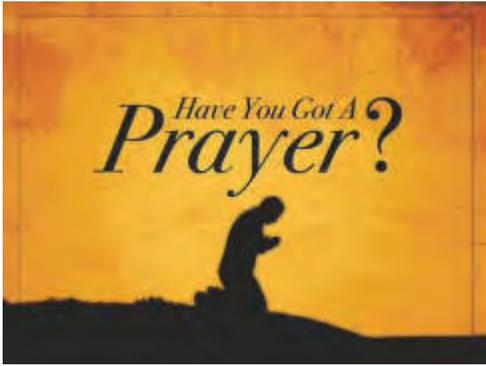


## FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Brothers and Sisters



“Jesus took Peter, James and John and went up the mountain to pray. While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white.”

It's not only Jesus, but all of us who are invited to pray during Lent; we are invited to go up the mountain with him and pray. That mountain may be at the kitchen table, or on the train going to work, or during lunch at the office, or at recess in school. We do not need to say a lot, but simply make the act of spending time in prayer, to place ourselves in silence before God, and listen to what he wants to say. Prayer is one of the weapons given to us in our daily spiritual fight, and just as fasting is linked to the first temptation in the desert - the temptation of the bread, prayer is linked to the third temptation - that of accepting one's life, one's own history.

In prayer, and only through prayer, can we begin to make sense of all the events in our life, in our history.

This life, this history, would mean for Jesus his acceptance of the Cross. Each one of us also has a cross in our life, it may be the fact that we are getting old, it may be a sickness, it may be a person –someone in the family, or someone we work with, it may be another kid in school, it may be something that happened in our past –an injustice or some humiliation that we suffered, it may be an experience of failure or frustration.

Whatever it is, we are all tempted to not see the Cross as evidence of the love of God, but on the contrary, we are tempted run away from it, to not accept it. Jesus was tempted the same way, when the devil invited him to throw himself off the pinnacle of the Temple, and to come floating down supported by angels to the amazement and applause of the crowd below. He is tempted to alienate himself, to live in the clouds, to re-invent another life, another history, not the one which he is living –the son of a poor carpenter from a backwater, someone nobody is going to listen to. His temptation is to correct the perceived mistakes which God has made, to re-write the script of his life, to do things according to his own rationale and way of thinking.

All of us have this temptation, the temptation to doubt the love of God in our life: “If God is so good, why is there sickness, why is my son or daughter like this, why did this or that happen?” Prayer opens another perspective, another dimension, it connects us to the God who loves us in everything that is happening, it allows us to see that everything contributes to our good.

One thing is for sure, prayer is not easy. As soon as we even think of praying a thousand other distractions present themselves; and if we do manage to actually start to pray, our mind begins to wander all over the place: “I've got to pick the kids from school, I need to make a dentists appointment, I must go food shopping, did I leave the chicken in the oven?, it's my sister's birthday, I need to file my taxes, the gutter needs repairing, I've got an itch on my nose...” This is normal, and we are not to be discouraged, for when we realize that our mind is flying all over the place, we can then bring it back, and begin praying again. And what should we say when we pray? One way to pray is to get rid of our shopping list –God do this, God fix that, God help me with this...and instead of telling God what we need, we can simply begin to listen to what He wants to say.

How can we listen to Him? We can simply begin to repeat, in silence, the Jesus prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me a sinner.” Slowly, without hurry, begin to say these words, the words which the blind man said to Jesus. Set aside five minutes each day to sit down in silence and repeat this prayer, and to start again and again when our mind becomes distracted and is thinking of other things.

Prayer always bears fruit, even if we think we are not making headway, even if we are completely distracted the whole time we should be praying, prayer will always bear fruit. The very act of sitting down for five minutes and accepting to be distracted, itself becomes a prayer. The effects of prayer may not be immediately evident, we may think we are wasting our time, but the fruits will certainly be manifest.

One of the consequences of prayer is the Transfiguration; just as Jesus became filled with light, our mind will also become enlightened; we begin to see the love of God in everything, including the Cross in our life.

Fr. Sean