

BRINGING HOME THE GOSPEL

October 20, 2019 • 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time • Luke 18:1-8

Jesus Talks About Praying Always

Jesus tells his disciples a story about a persistent widow who hounds a judge until she receives a just decision. He suggests they be as constant in their prayers to God. Luke writes that Jesus urged his followers to "...[P]ray always and not to lose heart" (v. 1).

Prayer is much more than the rote words we learn when we are children, or even the spontaneous prayers from our hearts. Prayer is more than just talking to God. There are three ways of praying: vocal prayer (praying with words or actions), meditation (putting our own thoughts into our spiritual reading), and contemplation (sitting with God in silence). All three forms of prayer have been a part of our Christian tradition for centuries, but the prayer of silence is probably the one of which people are least aware.

In the last twenty years or so, young people have forgotten what silence is. Those traditional times of quiet (taking a walk, riding a bike, playing outside) are gone. Youngsters are plugged into sound constantly. Even we adults can't seem to walk into a room or ride in the car without turning on a radio, a podcast, or streaming music. Yet we know that God often speaks to us in the quiet. Remember Elijah on that mountaintop? It wasn't in the wind, fire or earthquake that he heard the Lord. It was in the silence (1 Kings 19:12).

There is a tradition of prayer in our church called *lectio divina* (holy reading) that includes practiced silence. It involves four steps: reading (usually from Scripture), meditating (thinking about or placing yourself in the story), contemplation (sitting in silence with a word or passage) and prayer (telling

God what the reading meant to you). Small groups and individuals practice this ancient prayer form in monasteries and homes.

It can be a great way to pray together as a family. Lifestyles change with every generation. There are losses and gains. This generation seems to have an ever-growing access to information and a dwindling amount of quiet time. Helping our children appreciate silence is giving them a gift they can use all their lives.

FAMILY RESPONSE

Gather the family and read a story from Jesus' life. Meditate on the story by asking youngsters how they might feel if they were one of the people involved. (Make sure you talk about how you would have felt too.) Then sit together quietly for a minute. Finally, ask everyone to say a short prayer out loud.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

What was your prayer life like when you were a youngster? What is your prayer life like today? Write a short prayer to God in the space that is left.