

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, 15/7/2012. Holy Trinity

On this Sea Sunday we have been asked to support and pray for all seafarers and the work of the Mission to Seafarers undertaken in the Port of Newcastle and other ports throughout the world.

Every Sunday and at the Eucharist any time during the week we pray for the world and for the Church.

Further there is the pray list for the sick.

How do you fare in these calls to prayer?

Do you find them difficult or easy?

Today I want to share some thoughts on the practical side of prayer.

Apart from at your father or mother's knee and perhaps in Confirmation classes has anyone ever taught you how to pray?

Even though I have engaged in prayer for much of my life I do not find it easy.

I often think how terrible I am at prayer, when I hear people say that God spoke to them about this and that while they were in a quiet time of prayer.

I can honestly say that this has only happened to me a couple of times in my life.

I have read many books about prayer: some of them made me envious of the ease with which they go into prayer, while others make me so sure of my own shortcomings.

So where do we go from here?

I am reminded that we are all different: what works for one person does not work for another.

If you are struggling with prayer do not give up but try experimenting with a different approach until you find one that suits you.

Try books of prayer written by others and that you can make your own.

I like the practical approach of Celtic prayers that cover every area of life. I like this one which envelops us in the Presence of God:

“Christ with me sleeping,
Christ with me waking,
Christ with me watching,
Every day and night.”

Or another whenever they left home, however small the errand or short the distance:

“Bless to me, O God, the earth beneath my foot.

Bless to me, O God, the path whereon I go.”

How easy it is to bring it up to date with:

“Bless to me, O God, the accelerator beneath my foot.

Bless to me, O God, the road whereon I go.”

And yet, another:

“Calm me O Lord as you stilled the storm, still me, keep me from harm. Let all the tumult within me cease. Fill me Lord, with your peace.”

Another source from which we can draw our prayers is the collects and prayers of our liturgy that we use week by week.

Look in your prayer book and find what suits you, which you find that you can use.

Then we have the Psalms which express to God every human emotion, from grateful praise, to urgent pleas for help and cries for revenge.

They remind us that there is nothing that we cannot express to God; nothing is too small or trivial to right at the other end of the scale like world peace or the conversion of the world to follow God’s way.

When it comes to praying for others, I find it helpful simply to hold them up to God in love, for God’s love, healing and forgiveness to be on them.

Sometimes, of course, words fail us for some of the deepest things cannot be expressed in words.

In this case find another way, maybe just remaining in silence, or lighting a candle in the Founders’ Chapel and allowing it to continue to burn with the thought that your prayer continues to be offered and heard.

Then, of course, you can follow the pattern of prayer through the daily morning and evening prayer provided in our prayer book and here in Holy Trinity each morning at 8 am.

This pattern, morning and night, has kept me going for 60 years, most of that time on my own, for this is the daily office or worship of the world-wide church and this is part of my offering to God.

It is the ‘Opus Dei’, the work of God.

Some people are naturals at prayer, but for most of us it is costly and difficult: truly it is work, the work of God.

To sum up:

1. Don't give up
2. Experiment and find the way that best suits you
3. Don't be afraid to use the prayers of others and adapt them for your use.
4. Use your prayer book, the psalms including the daily office of the church
5. God is calling us to a better way to live – for ourselves, our families, our communities, this nation and for all the world and prayer seems to be a way of aligning us to this better way to live.
6. Talk about your prayer life with one of the priests in the parish and another person who can help you to strengthen your prayer life.
7. Don't give up and if you want to read this sermon look it up on the parish website during the week.

May God grant us the grace to persevere in prayer, now and always. Amen.