

## Twenty-Seventh Sunday of Ordinary Time October 6, 2019

One of the signs of a Dynamic Catholic is daily prayer. Many faithful Catholics struggle with prayer, as did many of the Saints. The difference is that the Saints kept praying when it was difficult, while others did not. It is easy to give up when, when prayer is dry and boring and most especially it feels like it makes no difference in the time of our need. There are many people who identify with the words of the Prophet Habakkuk today, "How long, O Lord? I cry for help but you did not listen?" In 2017 Saint Mary's Press of Minnesota in collaboration with the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate conducted a survey of young Catholics who have left the Church called, "Going, Going, Gone, The Dynamics of Disaffiliation in Young Catholics." When the young adults were asked, "In your words, what are the reasons that explain why you are no longer Catholic?" the most common response given (20 Percent) was that they stopped believing in God or religion. What leads people to stop believing in God or in religion? Here is one of the reasons given a young man named Adam, "The original cause [for disaffiliation] would have been watching my whole mother's family, on my mother's side, pray for my grandpa's lung cancer. In addition, everyone is praying for him, probably over 150 people. Personally praying for him and still there was nothing done to help him and that was my first skepticism." (p.17) the cry of Habakkuk is very real indeed. Why would people bother to pray when it seems that God does not answer our prayers to end disease, war, famine, prejudice, you name it? Perhaps Adam never heard the answer that God gave to Habakkuk gives us an answer: "For the vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint, if it delays, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not be late." The vision of God to overcome evil of which Habakkuk speaks is fulfilled in Jesus.

Christians believe that evil was not part of God's original plan, rather it was by Original sin that evil, suffering and death entered the world. Yes, God does at times allow for evil to exist, but only for some greater good. The vision, the plan of God since the first moment of Original Sin has always been to overcome evil. Jesus teaches about the power of faith and prayer when gave us the words to the Our Father, "thy kingdom come, thy will be done." Prayer is about God's will not ours and Jesus greatest prayer was live in action when he died on the cross, there we find the vision, the victory over evil, sin and even death itself. When we die with him, we have the promise also to rise with him.

Sometimes the roots of the mulberry bush of pain and suffering are deep side us. We can't uproot it be ourselves. Here is how it happened for me.

The summer before I was ordained a deacon I was praying in the church before the Blessed Sacrament. I heard a voice say to me, "I am preparing you for death." I had no idea what that meant. I wrote down in my journal exactly that and then I forgot about it. Two months later, in September, a seminarian friend of mine, Tuan Tran died of type non-A non-B hepatitis. He was buried on his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. It was the first time that I had to deal with the death of someone close to my age. The next October, four months after I was ordained to the priesthood, my dad died. The next November I was following a priest friend, Fr. Mike Schmidt on Highway 18 to go hiking with other priest friends. A car swerved into our lane and hit his car and killed him instantly. After three significant deaths in three years, I was at the lowest point of my life and I thought of leaving the priesthood. One night I decided to read my journal and read the words that I had written over a year before, "I am preparing you for death." God gave me in that moment what I needed to begin the healing process. In that moment the roots of the mulberry bush were uprooted and thrown into the sea. God showed me that he is always with me.

My brothers and sisters, never give up on prayer. Prayer is what opens our hearts to receive the love the God constantly pours upon us in every moment of our lives.