March 31, 2019: Fourth Sunday of Lent

The other day as I was trying to pray, my cat Sally wanted me to pay attention to her. I use my iPad for prayer and as I began to pray, Sally stood right in front of my iPad. So, I moved the iPad to the other side, and Sally moved and once again stood right in front of it. I then put the iPad on my lap, and she moved again and blocked my view with her head. No matter where I put the iPad, Sally moved to stand right in front of it. It was really kind of funny. I was patting her the whole time I was trying to pray but that was not enough: she wanted my full attention. She was determined that my focus should be only on her. In order to pray, I decided to move away from Sally. I could not let her become a distraction to me.

That is what can so easily happen where our prayer time is concerned. We all are living lives that are getting busier and busier. We have more and more responsibilities and tasks that take more and more of our time and attention. It is hard to determine our top priorities because each thing that comes up seems so important. It could be work, school, family, or friends. We might be trying to address problems, or some crisis in life, that just rises to the top of our immediate-to-do list. Every time we turn around it seems like, yet, another issue arises and we are not sure what to do first. Thus, prayer becomes less and less of a priority, and we feel certain God will understand that we don’t have time for prayer right now. We will get to it when we can give it the proper time and attention. We need to address the immediate issues confronting us first. The issue, or issues, stand right in front of our prayer time.

The problem with this thinking shows that we really do not understand prayer. Prayer is not about what God needs, but about what we need. The biggest issue most people address in their lives today is being overwhelmed with all that is happening around them. And, a big reason is that the more we distance ourselves from God, the more overwhelmed we feel. Prayer really has two purposes—to help us grow in relationship with God, and to help us fall in love with God.

All human beings, by their very nature, are made in the image and likeness of God, and have a built-in need to understand their true selves. All human beings also are predisposed to desire a relationship with God because that is the only way to understand who we are. Only through our relationship with God can we truly come to answer the questions we have in life. Only through prayer will we gain the right perspective for determining how we are personally called to respond to life’s difficulties. The only way we can have a real relationship with anyone is to gain an understanding of how the other person views things. Thus, communication is the only way to form a real relationship.

One of the things I work hard at when preparing couples for marriage is communication. I am very clear that without good communication you do not have a real relationship. And as soon as you stop communicating, your relationship will wither and die. Communication is not about convincing the other person of something, but rather, it is about helping each other to simply understand the other person’s perspective on an issue. The same is true with God.

In prayer, we seek to communicate with God, not to convince Him of something, but to understand his perspective on our issues. Why is this important? Because, simply put, God does have all the answers. He knows better than we do what He can handle and accomplish. He knows our deepest needs and desires. He understands what our talents and gifts are. He recognizes what our limits are and how best to support us in our times of need. When we turn to God and open up to him in prayer, we begin not only to learn about God, but through that conversation, to learn about ourselves.

Prayer is not simply a nice thing to do when we have time. The simple truth is that we can always find something that stands in front of our prayer time. And no matter how we try to work around it, something else can easily move in the way. If we are going to reclaim our lives—to begin to live life to its fullest—we have to make a change. If we want to stop always feeling overwhelmed by all that is happening around us, we need to simply choose to pray. We need to turn to God in prayer in order to grow in our relationship with Him. We have to decide that our relationship with our God is our real priority.
If you have any questions about anything, please do not hesitate to ask me directly, or send your questions to me at fr.brian@chelmsfordcatholic.org.

Please keep me in your prayers.

In Christ,

Fr. Brian