

## Pastor's Message

We come to the end of the first part of the Mass when we pray the Prayer of the Faithful. If you remember the Mass before the Vatican Council you know there was no prayer of the faithful in the Tridentine Mass. In the early liturgies and in Jewish tradition there were always prayers of petition to God along with prayers of praise. The reintroduction of the prayer of the faithful is a restoration of a very ancient practice in the church. Many scholars think that the prayer for the faithful was eventually dropped because it got too cumbersome and much too long with requests made to God for help. This tendency evident even today in some churches to add too many petitions to this prayer can be avoided if we remember that the prayer is not meant to cover all our needs but is meant to allow the entire church in all its communities to voice needs they see as important. In the prayer of the faithful we are praying not only for ourselves but for all the people of the world.

The usual order of the issues to be prayed for are: 1. for the needs of the church, 2. for the world and for civil authorities, 3. for the poor and those oppressed by any kind of need, and 4. for the needs of the local community. Of course, throughout the Mass we are asking God to hear us in our many needs. The Eucharistic prayer asks the Holy Spirit to change us and our gifts into the Body and Blood of Christ; it prays that we all might be one family; prays for the Pope, bishops and the entire church and world community; and for those who have died. The Prayer of the Faithful allows us to be more specific about the current needs we see as a community for the world and for ourselves.

The Prayer of the Faithful, like the *Kyrie* (Lord have Mercy) with which we begin the Mass, can be sung as a litany. When this is done well it can raise our petitions to God in a beautiful and more meaningful way. You can see and hear this at the Easter vigil when the Litany of the saints is sung and to which petitions for the church and the world are added. The Prayer of the Faithful is a fitting and beautiful way to end our liturgy of the Word. Here is an example of a prayer from St. Clement of Rome written around the year 95 AD:

We pray you, Master,  
be our help and protection.

Save the afflicted among us,  
have mercy on the the lowly.

Raise up the fallen,  
show yourself to those in need.

Heal the sick  
and bring back those who have strayed.

Fill the hungry,  
give freedom to our prisoners.

Raise up the weak,  
console the fainthearted.

Let all peoples acknowledge  
that you alone are God,  
and Jesus Christ is your Child,  
that we are your people,  
the sheep to whom you give pasture....Amen.

Fr. Chris