

## Bulletin Article for Sixteenth Sunday in OT A

7.19.20

*“Brothers and sisters: The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes with inexpressible groanings. And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the holy ones according to God’s will.” ROM 8:26-27*

This is the second reading for Mass today. While the first (typically Old Testament) reading and the Gospel are chosen to go together, the second reading (typically from a Pauline Epistle (or from the Letter to the Hebrews)) is usually a continuation of the Letter that was proclaimed in the prior week’s liturgy. So, this week we continue with a reading from the Letter of St Paul to the Romans. It is not very long, but I think that it packs a LOT of food for spiritual thought.

With so much going on in the world right now: with the pandemic with no end in sight; with civil unrest and nightly riots causing injury and property loss (at this writing Portland has seen +47 consecutive nights of violent protests not to mention the soaring number of shootings with 5 murders in one day the other day.), with SO many challenging realities that are at the same time scary and painful; so many issues that we need to have healed, I think that we all can identify with St Paul when he says, “in our weakness, we do not know how to pray as we ought”. Aren’t there many days when we feel so overwhelmed by all the pain and struggle in the world, that we do not know where to *begin* to pray, let alone *how* to pray!!

What a comfort to be reminded that the Spirit comes to us in our weakness!! And not only does the Spirit come to us, but that the Spirit *intercedes for us* with “inexpressible groanings”. So, it is not up to us to script the perfect prayer intention that is appropriate and all-encompassing. All we need to do is to take all the burdens, worries, pains, fears, and trials that are filling our lives and weighing us down and sit, in silence, with them; all we need to do is to take all the emotions within us and offer those emotion, thoughts, feelings to God (NO WORDS just allow the feelings and worries to surface) and let the Spirit “speak for us”!!!! And the One who searches the hearts knows what are the intentions of the Spirit.

This exercise of praying from the heart without words not only trusts that the Spirit does, in fact, intercede for us, but this practice also is an exercise in trusting in the Loving Providence of God who is always with us and who grant us what we need in measure far greater than we could ever hope for or possibly ask for.

So, in the midst of the chaos that seems to rage every day these days, take time for yourself. And in a few moments of silence, lift up your cares and let the Spirit take it from there!

**~Fr. Tom Gaughan, csc**