

Prayer leads to better living

Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

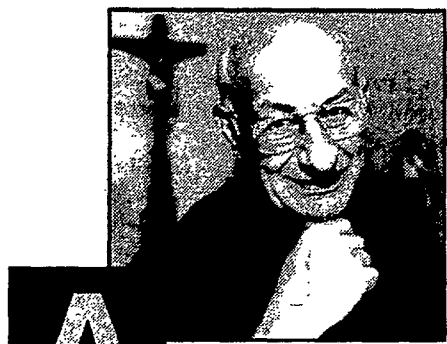
Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 9:28-36. (R1) Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18. (R2) Philippians 3:17-4:1.

"Jesus took Peter, John and James, and went up onto a mountain to pray" (R3). While Jesus was praying, He was transfigured. Prayer is like that. It can transfigure a person, change his very being.

When Jesus came down from the mount of Transfiguration, "the whole crowd was utterly amazed" — amazed, because the glory on the mount still radiated from Him. Prayer used to so change Jesus, even physically, that the apostles, accustomed like all Jews to praying seven times a day, asked Jesus to teach them how to pray.

If prayer doesn't change us, we are not praying aright. There are all kinds of definitions of prayer. "A conversation with God." "The expression of desire." "Lifting up one's mind and heart to God."

One definition I like is the one that says that "prayer is the opening of the soul to the inflowing of God." It is like pulling up the shade to let the sun shine into a room. The soul gets a new



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

vision of God and of itself. To be there is so good, because the vision transfigures the soul. Of course the classic definition of prayer is that of St. John Damascene: "Prayer is the petition of fitting things from God."

Prayer is a petition, because it is the request of an inferior to a superior. It is a petition of fitting things; that is, we can pray for whatever we can desire — if it is all right to desire it, it is all right to pray for it.

There are three times that we should pray: morning, night and in time of temptation.

Too often we let "saying" prayers get in the way of our praying. In the morning, simply fall to your knees, make the sign of the cross, and say, "Thank you, Jesus, for the good night's sleep. I offer this day to you. Please be with me during it." That is all! When a husband gets up in the morning and goes down to breakfast, all he need do is say to his wife, "Good morning, Honey. Hope you had a good sleep. I love you." Those few words will make her day.

At night, again fall to your knees, make the sign of the cross and say, "Thank you, Jesus, for the blessings of this day" (name one or two). Then tell Him you are sorry for any lapse that might have happened that day (name it). Finally, ask Him to give you a good night's sleep; and that if you should die, to take you to heaven.

In time of temptation, go to Mary and say, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for me now." Never has anyone who has fled to her protection been left unaided.

Prayer is the oxygen of the soul. As the body dies without oxygen, so the

soul dies without prayer. The God who said that unless you sow seed, you shall have no harvest, also said that unless you pray, you shall fall into temptation.

Prayer is not a fawning on God, coaxing Him to play favorites, wheedling him to change His mind. We pray, because God has made prayer a cause. He has willed certain effects be produced only by prayer. Many things God gives us without our asking; but there are certain things he will not give us without our asking. That is why prayer is an act of religion: it is submission to God's will.

One of the things God wants us to pray for is our salvation. As St. Augustine said, "The God who created us without our consent, will not save us without our consent."

That is why St. Alphonsus Ligouri said that if he had only one sermon to preach, he would preach it on prayer, for if you pray you will be saved; if you do not pray, you will be lost.

If you pray well, you'll live well;
If you live well, you'll die well;
If you die well, you won't go to hell;
If you don't go to hell, then all is well.

Prayer will give you a CALMplex.

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