

Be Sure to Pray for Yourself

by Austin Pardue, IV Bishop of Pittsburgh

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I feel sorry for anyone who does not consistently seek help from the Lord. The person who does not pray for himself is missing contact with the source of all power. If he is trying to live life on his own strength, he will sooner or later be empty of all his energy. He will face a crisis greater than any he has ever known.

Why should you pray for yourself? You cannot be a useful servant of Christ, or a helpful member of a family, or a true success in any field, if you do not have strength to give other people. Now there is no strength except that which comes from God. Every ounce of energy that you have is God's gift, and you know it. Therefore you need all the contact with God that you can get, because you cannot give others what you do not have yourself.

Our Lord took people where He found them. And where was that? *It was in a state of need.* Whether you know it or not, that is where you are right now, regardless of your education, sophistication, financial affluence, high social or political position. You are in need of help from God and if you do not know it, you are even worse off than you realize. Jesus gave strength to the sick, the frustrated, the nervous, the crippled, the diseased, the poor, the blind, the despised, and the dreadfully sinned. *They came to ask help for themselves.* All he asked was an evidence of faith and a desire to be helped.

It was the purpose of Jesus to lift people above their state of necessity, to strengthen them, so that in turn they could strengthen others. He said, *Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.* As a matter of fact, He was delighted when people asked Him for help because He then knew that they were humble enough to know that of themselves they did not have the strength to save themselves.

Let's think for just a minute about those misguided people who feel a sense of unworthiness in praying for themselves. There are two general answers to that problem. The first is that one actually feels a sense of guilt that is so penetrating that he cannot face God. Certainly Jesus Christ never meant anybody to feel that way.

The second reason is very subtle, and I got an answer to that from a clergyman in Pittsburgh. He said that he used to feel that it was *selfish* to ask God for things for himself. He struggled with the problem in despair for a long time. Then he saw the answer. It was this. He had not been able to pray for himself because of *his own pride*. He said that he swallowed his pride, because when he told people that he did not pray for himself, it made him feel superior to those who did pray for themselves. In other words, he was *boasting* about his humility in a very subtle way which even fooled himself. You see, he felt himself to be holier and humbler than the people who did pray for themselves. That is a strange one, isn't it?

Let us get back to this matter of guilt for just a minute. If you feel guilty in praying for yourself, it is really because you do not love yourself. Someone then says, "But isn't that selfish and wrong?" No, you are supposed to love yourself. The Bible says so. Our Lord, Jesus Christ, summarized the Law by commanding us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Yes He did not tell us to love our neighbors only. He said that we must love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Therefore, He commanded us to love in three directions: To God, to neighbor, and to self.

Why? Because Christ knows only too well that if you do not love yourself, you will never be able to love your neighbor. He who hates himself hates everybody else. God is a realist. He does not give you abstract ideals that you cannot live up to. He knows human nature. After all, He made it. Without Him, the burdens of life would eventually become unbearable. So you see, if you do not pray for yourself because you have a sense of guilt, it is probably because you have not accepted His forgiveness, and because you have not obeyed His command to love yourself as you love your neighbor.

In short, let us never cease to pray for ourselves. And let us never cease to say, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." Let us never cease to pray for the realization of Christ's presence within each one of us. For where He is, there is all the power available in the universe.

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