XXI TRINITY 2016 SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH FATHER CRAIG LOONEY EPHESIANS 6.10 ST. JOHN 4.46 \oplus

When we ask God for healing for ourselves or someone else, do we expect an immediate answer? Prayers for healing are above all expressions of our relationship with God.

What do we expect when we pray for healing? First we need to understand what prayer is and is not:

- *Prayer is not magic...*God is not a magician
- *Prayer does not demand a response...*we may ask God for help...we may not make demands of him
- *Prayer is for our benefit, not God's...*he already knows what we need...prayer strengthens our faith
- Prayer is not a guarantee against suffering...Jesus tells us the world will make us suffer...we are to be brave...he has defeated the world
- *Prayer is not for showing off...*it is about our trust in God

In this morning's Gospel we meet a man who comes to Jesus for help...his son is very sick and about to die. We learn the man is a government official...he is not Jewish...who lives in Capernaum...and had heard Jesus was passing through.

The man's plea for help is nothing short of a desperate prayer for healing for his son. He is at his wit's end...with nowhere else to turn. Why then does Jesus appear to dismiss the man's prayer by saying no one will believe in him unless they see miracles and wonders?

Saint John tells us the miracles and wonders Jesus performs...especially his healing miracles...are the indisputable proof and conclusive evidence Jesus is exactly who he claims to be...the promised Messiah and God's Son.

Our government official is not deterred by Jesus' response. He pleads with Jesus to come and heal his son. Jesus doesn't go with him...he tells him his son will live. Jesus' word is good enough for the man and he returns home to find his son is completely healed...a family restored to wholeness.

Jesus repeatedly demonstrates God's love and compassion for others in his willingness to restore human lives to wholeness regardless of who they are or where they come from. God has not changed the way he operates even today.

Saint Paul tells us we must be persistent in our prayers and to never give up...not because we want God's attention...we already have that. Paul tells us to always pray for all of God's people...the Church...and then for the whole world. We do this at Mass when we pray in a general way that God will help all those who are in "trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity."

We pray for healing for ourselves and for others in a personal way during the Intercessions at Mass. Miracles and wonders do happen...but we should not use the Intercessions at Mass as a magic formula for getting God to help those in need...he already knows what they need.

The Intercessions at Mass and our own personal prayer lives help reinforce our Faith in Jesus who tells us to come to him when the cares and worries in our lives weigh us down so he can help lift them. And all prayers get answered...yes...no...or wait a while.

When we ask God for healing we usually want him to take action and make the healing happen right away. We should not get discouraged of give up on prayer if someone we are praying for dies...death too is a type of healing...and it is something none of us can avoid.

Jesus tells us he came so we may experience everything life has to offer in the fullest. He means that quite literally but do we really believe him? Do we believe God can and will heal?

If we follow Paul's advice and are persistent in addressing our concerns to God we are showing we trust him to take care of our needs...whatever they are...wherever we find ourselves.

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