

XXI Trinity 2022

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

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*Ephesians 6.10-20 St. John 4.46-54*



Signs and miracles are Jesus' specialty!

The Gospel tells us Jesus is on his way back to Cana in Galilee after having celebrated Passover in Jerusalem. Many people had seen everything he had done during the festival.

A government official from Capernaum heard Jesus was nearby and came to ask him to come to his house and heal his sick son. Jesus' appears to ignore the cries of the desperate father and speaks to the crowd. He says to them none of them will believe unless they see signs and miracles.

The boy's father is not deterred by Jesus' apparent indifference...he is all the more insistent..."Come and heal my son now...before he dies!" Jesus tells him to go home and he will find his son alive and well. On his way home...the man's servants ran out to give him the good news his son was alive. His entire family believed in Jesus.

Jesus is never indifferent to anyone. He already knew what was in the man's heart...he wanted to hear from the man himself just how serious he was in asking for help...did he really think Jesus could do anything for his son? Or did he think Jesus' signs and miracles were just a magic show?

John spends a lot of time in his Gospel talking about the many miracles and signs Jesus performed during his time on earth. The healing miracles are all about restoring people's lives to wholeness. Even the Gospel accounts of Jesus turning water into wine and walking on water have an element of healing to them...Jesus calms people's fears.

The reason Jesus appears to ignore the cries of a desperate dad who wants his sick son to live...is he wanted the dad to get to the point he insisted Jesus heal his son. Jesus is giving us a lesson in what Father Massey Shepherd, author of the Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary...calls the "value of insistent faith."

Saint Paul tells us in this morning's Epistle to pray on every occasion and to be persistent in our prayers and to never give up. He tells us

to always pray for all of God's people. We do this during the Prayer for the Church, 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 do this in a more specific and for many of us a very personal way during the Intercessions.

The Intercessions help reinforce our Faith in Jesus who tells us to come to him when cares and worries in our lives begin to weigh us down, so he can lift those burdensome cares and worries. And God always answers prayers...although we do sometimes have to wait for an answer. Remember what Saint Paul tells us...be persistent in our prayers...not to get God's attention...we already have that...but because it is through prayer we begin to experience God's power to heal us and restore order to our lives.

Bishop Scarlett said during his recent visit to the Parish...Christian Life is a life of prayer. He has asked the parishes and people of the Diocese to set Wednesdays aside as a special day of prayer and fasting. During the Wednesdays in Advent we will offer Morning Prayer and the Litany for the Church and Evangelism.

Our parish has a long history of praying for those with special needs during Mass. We should never think that because more of us are praying God is more likely to hear and answer our prayers...than if just one of us does the praying. God hears our individual and collective prayers everywhere, at all times and in every circumstance. And prayer takes many forms.

Sometimes we have to wait for answer to our prayer, but they do get answered: yes...no...or wait a while. What we are doing in the Intercessions is emulate a father from 2000 years ago...we are being insistent and persistent...when we pray together in church...at work...on the road...or privately at home.

The signs and miracles of Jesus are all around us. Sometimes they come to us in dramatic and unexpected ways. More often they come to us quietly...bringing calmness and restoring order to our lives and the peace the world cannot give.

