

Prayer (Part II) By Mark Shea (catholicexchange.com)

One of the most curious facts about prayer is that we do it at all. Believers often overlook this fact because prayer is such an integral part of life that it's just part of our mental furniture.

But prayer is not at all obvious to people who stand outside a religious tradition. I speak from experience here. I was never an atheist (not enough faith for that audacity) but I was somebody who believed that God was basically unknowable. I figured he was pretty busy, what with a whole universe to run, and that our puny little problems were our responsibility to figure out and solve. So, on principle, I didn't pray when I was a teenager because it seemed to me sort of like the religious equivalent of going on the dole. I was a big believer in the American ethic of "God helps those who help themselves" and saw prayer as a sort of foxhole Christianity in which we human screwups tried to get God to clean up our messes for us.

I have, of course, learned since that this is not what prayer is about, but I think the motivation for not praying was not entirely ignoble and prideful. There are indeed times when prayer can act as a cover for irresponsibility and Jesus points this out (most famously in his story of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 8:9-14). Jesus condemns the Pharisee who prays "to himself". That's the point. **His highest responsibility is to the God who made him. But he makes no effort to offer himself back to God.** He's got it together. He's not like that loser of a tax collector. He makes all the right moves and hits all the right marks. He doesn't need anybody, including God.

Another curious paradox of prayer is that we pray to an omniscient God. Think about that. Not a few unbelievers find that to be *prima facie* (at first sight) evidence that Christianity is nonsensical rubbish, and it has, truth to tell, a certain *prima facie* appeal as an anti-Christian argument. What, after all, is the sense of telling an all-knowing God what you need? If you merely think of God as a Great Mind or a Vending Machine in the sky, then it's not surprising if you conclude that (if there is a God) he knows everything and you don't need to tell him anything. If you conceive of prayer primarily as the communication of information so that a job can get done, then why do it? Since the Central Control Unit already has access to the information, it does not need our input. So prayer appears to be an unnecessary hypothesis.

Jesus' way is more subtle. He basically says, "God knows everything, so you can tell him anything." Prayer is not about informing God of stuff he doesn't know and then applying sufficient threats, begging, pleading and vanity-stroking to get him to answer. **It is about revealing who you are to him and receiving his gift of himself through the creatures he has made.**

That, by the way, is why Jesus also teaches us to be importunate in prayer. In short, he urges us to bug God and not give up. That, again, seems pretty weird if you are not a Christian. Why would God not just answer you the first time? Why make you keep coming back (sometimes for years) with the same seemingly fruitless prayer? It seems to the outsider like a mind game that is either being played on us by God or by ourselves. How do we answer the problem of unanswered prayer?

God made us without us, says Augustine, but **he does not save us without us.** In the struggle of prayer, we don't change God. He changes us. We find out who we really are as we go through the long process of learning how to die. Every part of life, even the frustrating periods of waiting for something to happen (like Advent) get taken up in the human drama and offered to God, who uses it to change us into the image of his Son. They also pray who only stand and wait.

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St. Mary & St. Joseph Catholic Churches

Ashland



1625 Adams Street, Ashland NE 68003
Saturday Vigil Mass: 5:00 PM
Sunday Mass: 8:30 AM

Greenwood



7 Oak Street, Greenwood
Sunday Mass: 10:30 AM

Pastor: Father Gary Coulter

Rectory & Fax: 944-3554, CCD/Hall: 944-7509

View the weekly bulletin & monthly calendar Cell: 202-3782, stmaryashland@windstream.net
at our **website: home.windstream.net/stmaryashland**

Welcome to new parishioners,
please call the rectory to register
or for information on any of our parish
activities and organizations.

Confessions a half hour before Masses
Saturday 4:00-4:50 PM St. Mary
Sunday 8:00-8:20 AM St. Mary
10:00-10:20 AM St. Joseph
Any time by calling the rectory.

Mass Schedule for this week				
Sat.	Aug. 21	5:00 PM	Ashland	Poor Souls
Sun.	Aug. 22	8:30 AM	Ashland	+ Jerry Campbell
		10:30 AM	Greenwood	For the People
Mon.	Aug. 23	9:00 AM	Ashland	+ John Tafoya
Tues.	Aug. 24	9:00 AM	Ashland	Mary McCarty
Wed.	Aug. 25	9:15 AM	Care Center	
Thurs.	Aug. 26	9:00 AM	Ashland	Special Intention
Fri.	Aug. 27	9:00 AM	Ashland	+ Jerry Campbell
Sat.	Aug. 28	9:00 AM	Ashland	
		5:00 PM	Ashland	+ Clare Murphy
Sun.	Aug. 29	8:30 AM	Ashland	For the People
		10:30 AM	Greenwood	Thanksgiving

August 22, 2010

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

Ministries for Next Weekend

Sat. Aug. 28 - 5:00 PM
Servers: Kasuske, Survil
Acolyte: Craig Pease
Lector: Mary Logsdon
Sun. Aug. 29 - 8:30 AM
Servers: Kresak, Stander
Acolyte: Tom Spears
Lector: Rod Reisen
Sun. Aug. 29 - 10:30 AM
Lector: Jeannine VanLaningham
Offertory: Schulke-Harms

Our Return to the Lord, Aug. 14-15

	<u>St. Mary</u>	<u>St. Joseph</u>
Adult:	\$ 1,037.00	\$ 160.00
Plate:	\$ 171.25	\$ 28.02
Children:	\$ 1.00	
Holy Day:	\$ 477.00	\$ 75.00
New Weekly Budget:	\$ 1,708.15	\$ 396.58

Readings and Celebrations this week:

August
23 Mon 2 Th 1:1-5, 11-12 / Mt 23:13-22
[Saint Rose of Lima, virgin]
24 Tue Rv 21:9b-14 / Jn 1:45-51
Saint Bartholomew, apostle
25 Wed 2 Th 3:6-10, 16-18 / Mt 23:27-32
[St Louis of France; St Joseph Calasanz, priest]
26 Thu 1 Cor 1:1-9 / Mt 24:42-51
27 Fri 1 Cor 1:17-25 / Mt 25:1-13
Saint Monica
28 Sat 1 Cor 1:26-31 / Mt 25:14-30
St Augustine, bishop and doctor of the Church
22ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
Sir 3:17-29 / Heb 12:18-24 / Lk 14:1, 7-14

Stewardship Thought

Today's reading from Isaiah describes the Israelites bringing their offering to the Lord "in clean vessels."

The gift of myself — my patient endurance and fidelity to the will of God — is as important as the monetary gift I offer.

See Isaiah 66:20

Congratulations

Anniversaries this week:

Gene & Teresa Kresak
Ken & Kathy Broz

Birthdays this week:

Jackie Kasuske
Jaylie Bentz
Jessica Dea
Mary Meehan
Adam Lichtas
Karl Rosenbaum
Quinton Svoboda
Clay Weston
Marie Lutz
Frank Stander
Anna Boggs
Colby Kresak

Calendar for this Week

Sun. Aug. 22, 6 PM **Summer Catechism Class**
7:30 PM St Mary **Parish Council**
Wed. Aug. 25, 9:15 AM **Mass** at Care Center
7:00 PM CCD / Youth Group **Parent Night**
Thurs. Aug. 26, 7 PM **Planning Commission Meeting** at City Hall
Sat. Aug. 28, 9:30 AM **Work / Cleaning Day** at St Mary Education Center
Sun. Aug. 29, 5:00 PM **Potluck Dinner**

Parish Announcements

Congratulations to our newest member, Samuel Robert Breen, son of Nick and Abby, baptized Sun. Aug. 15 at St. Mary.

Thank you to all who participated in the St. Joseph Greenwood **Pancake Breakfast**.

All parents should receive a letter with information about the **CCD Registration and Parent Night** this Wed. Aug. 25, 7:00 PM at St. Mary.

This Sat. Aug. 28, 9:30 AM St. Mary will hold a **Work / Cleaning Day** to clean, repair and paint the Education Center to get ready for the coming CCD year. Many volunteers would make light work. You are welcome to bring tools, paint and cleaning supplies.

A **Potluck Dinner** will be hosted by St Mary next Sun. Aug. 29 at 5:00 PM. All are invited to join us in this community fellowship and food. Please bring a hot dish and salad or dessert. Table service is provided.

In lieu of birthday gifts, Fr. Coulter suggests you consider giving a **Mass Stipend** offering. A donation to have Mass offered for a loved one is the greatest gift. Mass can be said for anyone, Catholic or non-Catholic, living or deceased.

Sock Hope - St. Joseph is joining the other Greenwood Churches throughout August in collecting new socks to donate to the People's City Mission. Men/Women/Children's socks needed.

St. Mary's parish **Prayer Chain** is available to pray for anyone who is seriously sick or for grave needs only. Call Marie Groenjes (944-7458) or Pat Estey (944-2790) with intentions.

Fr. Coulter has a FREE extra ticket to hear **Fr. John Corapi** speak on "**The Battle Between Good and Evil**" Sat. Sept 11 at the Omaha Quest Center: www.fathercorapiomaha.com

Would you like to host a **foreign exchange student** for 6 weeks or more? Pax Program of Academic Exchange is looking for host families. Contact Jessica at 202-2199, see www.pax.org

St. Mary Preschool Announcement

St. Mary would like to open a **Catholic Preschool** in our Education Center, starting in October. However, we need a change in the Ashland zoning law. Therefore your assistance is requested, to either: A) Attend the Planning Commission meeting at city hall this Thurs. Aug. 26, 7 PM and speak on why this would be good for Ashland. Or B) if unable to speak Thurs. please compose a letter to the Planning Commission / City Council expressing your support, and deliver/email the letter to Fr. Coulter.

Diocesan Announcements

Natural Family Planning (NFP) Creighton Model Introductory Session Tues. Aug 24. For location and pre-registration call: 488-2040.

Thursday Night Forum Aug. 26, 8 PM at Omaha Gloria Deo, 13065 W Center. Fr. Paul Hoelsing will speak on "Seminarians for the New Millennium". Free Lecture, Q&A, Refreshments.

Waverly **Retreat House**, weekend retreats Aug. 27-29 Women, Sept. 10-11 Men & Women. Contact 786-2705 www.goodcounselretreat.com

Pope Paul VI Institute, to honor its 25th Anniversary, will hold a **Celebration of Life and Love** - a free **Family Fun Day** Sat. Sept 4, 9 AM-4 PM at the Omaha Quest Center. Rides, games, entertainment, concessions, speakers and more. See www.PopePaulVI.com

Outdoor Family Fun at Camp Kateri, just south of York, NE. Sept 25-26. Cost, \$99.00 per cabin for group of six. Create family memories and build family ties with an outdoor adventure in nature: fishing, canoeing, hiking, and camp fire tales. Call Fr. Tom Kuffel (402-266-5581) for registration and information.

Please Pray this week for our Religious Sisters

Jr. Novices preparing to become Carmelite Sisters: Sr. Mary Pia of the Cross, Sr. Pauline of Christ, Sr. Miriam Therese.