

An unemployed father of 4 is going for his second interview...*please let me get the job!*

The neighbor kid from down the street is entering rehab for the 3rd time

at the young age of 27...*please let it 'take' this time!*

A gunman walks into a class room...*please save me....*

Your daughter is being assigned to her second tour of duty in Iraq...*please keep her safe....*

The mother of three young children submits to a second round of chemotherapy....*please, let her be cured....*

**I am sure that each one of us here could add any number of our own concerns
our own worries to this list...**

**A lot of people throughout the day ask me to pray for their very real worries...
big stuff, like the examples above...**

**I'm not being asked for someone to win the lottery
or to be selected as a contestant for Wheel of Fortune....**

**I'm not talking about praying for the Cubs to win the World Series
(although I'm tempted to pray for this one!)
or for little Johnny to be chosen as the star of his first grade play...**

**All of us, during our lifetimes encounter into situations that any loving,
compassionate person...or God ...would grant our request, if they could!**

**Who wouldn't want the Father to get the job, the neighbor kid to stay off the drugs,
or the young soldier to come home safe, or the mother to be cured of cancer so she could
raise her children or the innocent student protected from a mentally ill,
heavily armed gunman?**

What kind of God would not answer that kind of prayer?

What *does* it mean to 'pray'?

In our reading today, Jesus gives his listeners some guidelines about prayer.

Don't be too wordy.

Don't do it for show.

Be sincere.

and what we now call the Lord's prayer or the Our Father.

Those are beautiful guidelines for 'how' to pray,

but what the real struggle, I think, for all of us

is how do we deal with our expectations

for the 'results' of our prayer.

I would like to offer you a few of my thoughts,

but I, in no way, consider this meandering to be the final and absolute answer...

If I may....

When I was a young child,

I was taught to 'say' my prayers...

most of us were taught to pray this way.

We learned certain prayers in childhood...

When our prayers were answered the way we wanted...we were super happy!

If they weren't....well, maybe we were praying for the wrong thing

or perhaps God's answer was 'no'.

I have heard it said, that God answers all prayers and sometimes the answer is no...

fair enough...

but what do you say to the young mother with 3 little children and cancer?

When I was young, I was taught that God was all powerful and all knowing...

wouldn't an all powerful and all knowing God cure the sick and protect the innocent?

These kinds of thoughts and questions have perplexed people from the beginning....
but for today, here is what I'm thinking....

Life on this beautiful planet is delicate and difficult....

WE are limited creatures...

We have bodies that break and break down...

We live in bodies that do not live forever.

This fragility and uncertainty is almost too much for the human mind
to deal with...

and I emphasize ALMOST....

One of the ways we deal with all of life's uncertainty and fragility,
as people of faith,

is to believe that God has a plan...

that God's wisdom is greater and larger than our small perspective
and that when something doesn't happen that we pray for,
we trust that it is for our good in the big picture of life...

And that often seems to be true!

How many times have we said, like Garth Brooks sang:

"Thank God for unanswered prayers"?

The job that we had prayed wasn't offered

but we landed in a better one down the line....

or the person we had hoped to marry but didn't...

and we ended up marrying our real love, later on...

or what at first appeared like a failure, in fact, turns out to be
a serendipitous discovery that lead to a magnificent good....

situations like that....

**That is all well and good. And I'm grateful when things work out that way.
I'm willing to trust in the wisdom of the Holy more than my small perspective on life...**

But what about all the other situations.

What about all of the unjust situations of life,

What about the pediatric cancers,

the drive by shootings,

the random acts of horrific violence?

What is prayer about in the most difficult times of life?

What if prayer isn't about avoiding the pain of life

but to see our way through the pain and limitations of this life...

What if prayer is about transforming the way WE ARE

in the beauty and the uncertainty of our lives?

A major teaching of the Resurrection, for me, is that wisdom, strength, courage,

new life is ALWAYS possible,

no matter how unjust the situation might be

What about if prayer was the method, the way

that we connect to the Presence of God inside of US always and everywhere

in every situation...

What about if prayer was like opening the spigot

to a deep well of courage and strength....

What about if prayer was like rooting ourselves firmly

into the unshakable, unbreakable source of all life....

What about if prayer was enfolding ourselves into the womb

of Holy Love that has been present from the beginning and extends without end...

**What about if prayer was about be willing to trust and to surrender
the mystery of God, knowing that Life never ends
but is transformed
in ways that we cannot imagine?**

**What about if prayer is saying yes to a new way of seeing life
that began before we were born in these bodies
and continues long after these bodies give up?**

**When I think of prayer in this way...not as avoiding the troubles of life,
but of finding my way through the difficulties....
I am willing to trust that I will ALWAYS have a source of power, courage,
a source Grace that is more than my own.**

**When I think of prayer in THIS way...
Fear is diminished
and the Presence of Deep Peace and
a MAGNIFICENT Love is FELT...
and when I Know God in this way....
I can only whisper, 'thank you'. Amen**

