

Pray with and for each other, offering care and support in joy and sorrow

One of the first callings of the Christian is to pray. We are told that Jesus often went off to be in prayer. The disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. The followers of Jesus spent time in the synagogue and Temple in worship and prayer. We are, according to Paul, all called to pray without ceasing. To follow Christ is to be a person who prays.

There are two types of prayer we are expected to offer – corporate prayer and personal prayer, and both sustain the other. Our corporate prayer engages us in the ongoing praise and worship that is offered up by the whole Body of Christ. Corporate prayer keeps us from focusing only on our own desires and wants; it teaches us that the world of prayer is much larger than just my own self. But God also desires that we offer our own self, and our personal prayer is important in order to name before God that which we desire and fear. Personal prayer is shaped by and informed by our corporate prayer, and is an important aspect of our life in Christ.

When we covenant to pray with and for each other we are covenanting to be there in corporate prayer with one another and to remember the needs and hopes and concerns of the parish in our personal prayers. Some people find to pray for others easy, some find it uncomfortable, but we simply need to be willing to be ourselves in our prayer life, and to pray. As someone once said, the only way to pray wrong is to not pray.

Our prayers for each other lead us to not only words, but actions. We covenant to offer care and support to each other in joy and sorrow. This is the call to community life, a life which shows up in times of need and grief, shows up in times of celebration and happiness.

But this call to prayer and care and support is not just about our parish members, it is about the whole of creation, it is about how we pray for the needs and concerns of the world. And so in our weekly prayers of the people we offer prayers for the church, the world, the community, those in need and the departed. This is why in our daily Noon Day prayers we pray by name those on our prayer list – those in need, those serving in the military, those who we have been asked to remember before God. Our prayers help us remember that the world is larger than our Valley and God loves all of it.

I have heard it said “I don’t know how to pray.” Most of the time I simply will respond that prayer is conversation with God, and it does not need to be more difficult than that. But there are types of prayer, and one simple way to think about our life in prayer is “acts” – adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. This is a good reminder that majority of our prayer life is not telling God what we want, but instead is worship, is offering our confession, voicing our thanksgivings and only then making our asking.

One time years ago I was having a difficult time offering prayers due to some things happening in my life and a friend said “I will pray for you.” This was not saying she would offer prayers to God about me, but that she would offer my prayers during this time when I could not. This is

another important aspect of our community, to do together what at times we cannot do as individuals, but as a community we can trust that the prayers will be offered, the supplications

will be heard. Let us then pray with and for each other, offering care and support in joy and sorrow.