

Dear Parents and beloved children of our Parish,

If the person you want to communicate with is not close by there are options of how to reach them. One can send an email, or call or use social media to send a message. In the past, this was not easily done and that's why learning about how people felt, one looks at their letters.

Prayer does not differ much from modern ways of communication. As a matter of fact, because of them it is easier to understand the way prayer should work. It is nothing short of focusing our attention to God, who is ever-present beyond our awareness, and communicating with Him. This act resembles the calling for help made to our parents when we were very young and scared.

When talking to our parents rarely (if ever) do we think that we would not exist without them. We carry on our conversations with them in the most natural manner, without reflecting on their contributions to our life in this world. Yet, we also do not presume that we would have been alive without parents. A similar pattern also rules our prayer life. When in trouble or lost, we seek out for help and we turn to the person who can help us, (God), asking for His intervention. It makes little difference whether we can see Him, hear Him or touch Him. Then we talk to Him as we did in our early youth when we called for our parents' help. We place before God our troubles, we recall His help for our accomplishments or we ask Him for advice and guidance. These calls are simply prayers.

We often think that it is necessary to open up a prayer book and recite prescribed prayers. We consider necessary to memorize prayers and recite them at specific times of the day. Some prayers also are held in higher esteem, or command higher respect because they come from God Himself (like the "Our Father" which Christ Himself taught us) or are repetitions of calls really great saints made in the past to God. Repeating these is undoubtedly essential because they set perfect examples of how to talk to God. Yet, to these fixed prayers we should also add our own concerns. Our concerns are extensions of who we are and how we open ourselves to God as reveal our "weak side". A funny thing happens then: our shared concerns are not exclusively ours anymore. They become petitions requiring God's attention, petitions that He has to address in His way, and reminders of things troubling us or requiring His attention. Our prayers become God's concerns.

We have to be careful about prayers. Repetitions of highly "stylized" ones, like the "Our Father", can sometimes, hinder the immediacy of praying. As we repeat them, we forget the content and focus on memorizing the prayers. That is why, in addition to the "stylized" prayers, personal prayers are also necessary. Both types of prayers work in tandem appealing to Him to take care of us as He sees fit.

So when do we pray? We know that God sustains life and that our lives depend on Him. If we trust our lives to God it is advisable to remind Him of our troubles in a proper manner. St. Paul note that we should pray unceasingly. It is because prayer brings our concerns before God, who can resolve them, offering us the proper guidance for things to come and familiarizing us with His presence.

In Christ

Fr. N. Galanopoulos