

LENTEN PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS



LORD JESUS, help me to walk with You each day of my life, even to Calvary. The sorrow and joy, the pain and healing, the failures and triumphs of my life are truly small deaths and resurrections that lead me closer to You. Give me the faith and trust I need to walk with You always. Amen.

MARY, MOTHER OF OUR REDEEMER and our most Blessed Mother, be with us through life's journey. As you comforted Jesus on the road to Calvary by your silent and loving presence, as you held his lifeless body close to your Immaculate Heart, as you offered the sadness and suffering that only a mother can feel when she sees the suffering of her child, look upon me as you looked at Jesus. See His marred image in my frail nature; hold me close to your mother's heart in my moments of temptation and sin; and pray for me that I may be for God what I was created to be. **A LIVING IMAGE OF JESUS**. Amen.

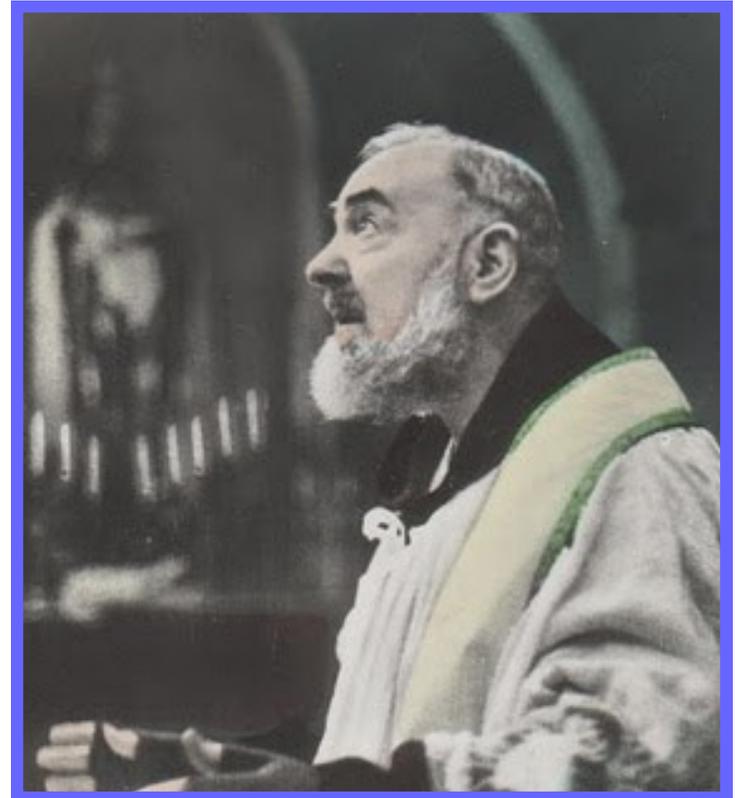
LORD JESUS CHRIST, you gather your people during this holy season of Lent, and you call us to repent and believe the Gospel. Remove any barriers that keep us from you so that we might live fully the life we received at Baptism and carry our cross each day. You have given us Padre Pio of Pietrelcina as a modern image of the Suffering Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ. Through his intercession and your divine grace, may we turn to you in our need, thank you in our abundance, and share your love with the world around us. Amen. *(excerpted from prayers of Padre Pio)*

**WE SHOULD ALL REMEMBER THAT WHEN PRAYING
THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS AN UNANSWERED PRAYER
ONE WAY OR ANOTHER THE LORD DOES ANSWER OUR PRAYERS
SOMETIMES WE ARE JUST TOO BUSY TO RECOGNIZE IT!**



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THE DIFFICULTY OF "UNANSWERED PRAYER"



*"My eyes are ever towards the Lord,
for He shall pluck my feet out of the snare:
look Thou upon me, and have mercy on me;
for I am alone and poor.*

*"My eyes are forever turned towards the Lord:
for He shall release my feet from the snare;
look upon me and have mercy on me,
for I am abandoned and destitute." —*

Psalm 24 (25): 15, 16.

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT: MARCH 11th A.D. 2012

THEME: The difficulty of "unanswered prayer".

*The following homily was written by Reverend Charles J. Higgins, Pastor
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This Introit Psalm which sets the tone for our Lenten Sunday Mass today is the expression of a soul praying to God in the midst of great distress — indeed, it is the prayer of a soul who finds itself without any recourse to ordinary means: only God can help.

One thing we are taught with certainty, and which is reinforced with great emphasis during these days of Lent, is that God will always respond to the humble prayer of faith. Think of it: God commands us to pray so that He might help us. When Christ's disciples asked of Him, "Lord, teach us how to pray," He taught them that perfect prayer of petition which is the Lord's Prayer, the Our Father (the "Pater Noster" in Latin). To put it simply, through Our Lord Jesus we are both commanded and invited to ask of God every worthy thing — no matter how small and personal to us.

The difficulty is, of course, as every person who struggles with the life of faith knows, prayers do not work like magic with God. We are commanded to pray and yet many of the things we pray for remain seemingly unanswered — and I stress that phrase *seemingly* unanswered, because, in truth, there is no such thing as an "unanswered prayer".

I want to consider then, how are we to make sense of the difficulty of seemingly unanswered prayer. Why is it that certain prayers seem to be unanswered by God?

First of all, we have to discount prayers which are made with a bad heart and are not reflective of faith. (In St. Luke's Gospel, Chapter II, for example) there were those who when Jesus delivered a man from a demonic spirit, they attributed it to the power of Satan: *"He casteth out devils by beelzebub, the prince of devils. And others, tempting, asked of Him a sign from heaven."* At other times and places, such as in his own town of Nazareth, Our Lord could work few miracles on account of their lack of faith.

Why? Because He had not the power? No, because He would not act where he did not find humble hearts. Where He found defiance and a "show me" attitude, He held back. And so God does...

Secondly, God will reject prayers for bad or foolish things, or that betray a fundamentally unreal approach to the duties of life— the prayer to win it big in the lottery for example.

But what about prayers, our prayers, that do come from faith, and with an awareness of our unworthiness, and yet seem to be unanswered? Three things.

- 1) God may grant it, but not right away. For the sake of a greater good, especially our own, He will require us to pray for an intention a long time, maybe even a very long time. Yes, it is a test. And we just have to accept that.
- 2) God may refuse it. There was nothing wrong in us asking, but for whatever reason, God's answer was no.
- 3) Finally — and this is crucial — God is saying yes, but at first glance it looks to us as if He's not hearing or He's not doing good by us.

It's like this. We can only ask according to what seems best to us. But our viewpoint is so small. We're limited human creatures and our thinking is often muddled and mistaken about the truth of things. We don't see what God sees so we never really know what's best for us. We have to trust in His Goodness and His Mercy. And when it comes to the life of prayer, we have to grasp this saying of Saint Ambrose: *"God always gives more than He is asked."*

So, do not lose heart in praying to God. He is hearing you and He is answering you. There is no such thing as an unanswered prayer. Pray in the spirit of the opening verses of Psalm 24(25): *"To thee, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul: in thee, O My God, I put my trust. Let me never be put to shame."*

Fr. Higgins