

Docility and Relationship

Dear brothers and sisters,

As many of you know Fr. Von and I traveled to Ohio last week for a conference at the Franciscan University of Steubenville. On the way down to Logan Airport we found out that the flight was delayed by about four hours. After waiting about two hours, we found out that our flight was then delayed an additional hour. Eventually, our flight that was supposed to take off at 3:01, actually took off at 8:50. Upon reflection, I realized that we were presented with an option: get frustrated and angry, or surrender it as part of God's will.

My friends, we have to be careful about "our plans." Man is, in and of himself, not sufficient. He is a finite creature dependent on the eternal God to provide him even with his next breath. When we begin to lose sight of this we can become frustrated or even angry.

One aspect of the priesthood that may seem oppressive to those who are unfamiliar with the reasoning behind it, is obedience. Every man who is ordained to the priesthood makes a promise of obedience. For a priest like Fr. Von, it is a promise of obedience to the bishop of the Diocese of Manchester. This means that when the bishop calls him to do something (as long as it does not call him to betray the Faith or morals that the Christ taught us) he must obey. Closely tied to obedience therefore is docility. Docility does not mean, in this context at least, ignoring ones rational faculties, rather it points towards the idea that man is in himself not sufficient, and looks towards the Father to show Him the narrow road. It is docility to the will of God. How do we come to practice docility? It begins in prayer. Prayer is not limited to saying "Our Fathers" and "Hail Marys," though they certainly provide a base for it. Prayer is the act of communication with God. In prayer, we speak to and come into closer union with the three persons of the Trinity.

Prayer is so very foundational to all that we are as Catholics. I can assure you that my intention is not to shame you or to make you or someone you know feel badly. Indeed, that would be hypocritical of me since, only a few years ago, I didn't have a prayer life, and it could have been worse if I was not blessed with the right people around me (but that topic, and the related topic of gratitude, can be covered later). My life was changed when a priest finally asked me how my prayer life was, and I had to admit to him that it was practically non-existent. Prayer makes all the difference in the world. Without prayer, it is quite possible that I could have even left the Church. I cannot help but wonder if the reason for so many people losing their faith, or forgetting the importance of the Sacraments, is because of a lack of prayer. When we open ourselves to prayer we come to recognize our reliance on God, and even crave a relationship with Him.

In light of this, I would like you to consider coming to a talk that I am giving on **July 18th at 7PM** in the Church. The topic is: starting a prayer life from scratch. In this presentation I will suggest some ways to begin praying. There will be an official bulletin insert to follow with more details.

The case that I am trying to build for the necessity of having a prayer life is not that it will be like "waving a magic wand and your world will be right." If I may paraphrase something that Fr. Von told me: the Church is not into immediate satisfaction, it is into eternal life. The goal of the Church, and thereby also of prayer, is to bring us into closer relationship with the Holy Trinity. The way in which that relationship will grow, and become a joy and not a burden, is through prayer.

Consider what your reaction would be if the person you were about to marry told you that they loved you and wanted to spend the rest of their life with you. However, they decided that they would only meet you once a week for about an hour and outside of that, they just did not feel the need to speak to you or spend any time with you. This would seem to be the classic case where a couple needed counseling. Yet, it is often our position when it comes to union with God. Again, not meant to offend, but merely to solidify the necessity of prayer. I hope to see you on the 18th.

Seminarian Rory Traynor