

March 30, 2020

Monday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Reflection

God Asks for Prayer

The Lord heard Susanna's prayer.

Praying in spirit we offer prayer to God as a sacrifice. Prayer is an appropriate and an acceptable sacrifice to God. It is the offering he has asked for and the offering he expects.

We must make this offering with our whole heart. We must fatten it on faith, prepare it by truth, keep it unblemished by innocence, spotless by chastity, and we must crown it with love. We must escort it to the altar of God in a procession of good works to the sound of psalms and hymns. Then it will gain for us all that we ask of God. What can God refuse to prayer offered in spirit and in truth, when he himself asks for such prayer? How many proofs of its efficacy we read about, hear of, and believe! . . .

If prayer once had the power to call down fire from heaven, is it any wonder that it can call down from heaven the waters of grace? Prayer is the one thing that can conquer God. But Christ has willed that it should work no evil: all the power he has given it is for good.

Its only skill is to call people back from the gates of death, give strength to the weak, heal the sick, exorcise the possessed, open prison doors, free the innocent from their chains. Prayer cleanses from sin, drives away temptations, stamps out persecutions, comforts the fainthearted, gives new strength to the courageous, brings travelers safely home, calms the waves, bemuses robbers, feeds the poor, overrules the rich, lifts up the fallen, supports the faltering, sustains those who stand firm.

All the angels pray. Every creature prays. Cattle and wild beasts pray and bend the knee. As they come from their barns and caves they look up to heaven and call out, lifting up their spirit in their own fashion. The birds too rise and lift themselves up to heaven: they open out their wings, instead of hands, in the form of a cross, and give voice to what seems to be a prayer.

What more need be said about the duty of prayer? Even the Lord himself prayed. To him be honor and power for ever and ever. Amen.

Tertullian, *On Prayer* chapters 28 & 29

Tertullian (ca. 160–225), a native of Carthage, was a prolific early Christian writer. A notable Christian apologist, he has been called the “father of Latin Christianity.”

© *Give Us This Day* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2020)