

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Mar 13th 2014

Today's readings emphasize both the importance of maintaining a prayerful life and the need to exercise patience, understanding, and a faithful commitment to God. All three readings focus on the act of asking God to respond to personal prayer, but what they fail to state is that answers to our prayers do not necessarily occur the way we desire or even within a timeframe that we find appealing.

Human nature, at least in American society, is unfortunately too often focused on expecting and sometimes even demanding immediate gratification, including a response from God to our deepest prayers. This mind-set however is unrealistic and not compatible with God's expectations for living an authentic spiritual life.

To me the message today speaks volumes to the value of prayer in general. Queen Esther knew God answered prayers to those who were faithful to his Word. Her demonstration of obedience and wisdom to not ask God to do the work for her, but rather for God to "give her" the courage and knowledge to speak in persuasive tongue is testament to her understanding of the utility of prayer. Living an authentic prayerful life is a personal reminder of how the spiritual side of our mortal being can sometimes be in conflict with human emotions and expectations.

Reflection -

Recently I was traveling cross-country on business and was in need of fun reading material to pass the time. I purchased a little book in one of the airport newsstands entitled, "The Power of Prayer" by E. M. Bounds. It is a small daily reflection book covering various aspects of prayer based on Gospel readings as one might expect based on the title. To my amazement the ribbon marker in the unopened book was inserted directly between the readings for July 4 and 5. The reading for July 5 ironically coincided to same reading for today from Matthew 7:7. Hum ... God does speak to us in mysterious ways but this seemed a bit unusual. Anyway, as I read the short passage in the book a profound message became clearly evident in Christ's use of three simple words ...Ask, Seek, Knock.

The three key words as expressed in the Gospel of Matthew are significant in what they imply by the power of prayer. In fact they represent a progression of prayer (like the rungs on a ladder) that equates to the necessity of "waiting and persevering". First ASK through prayer- God desires a personal relationship; Continue to SEEK answers to prayer- God asks us to be patient for his unwavering love; and finally do not hesitate to KNOCK on God's door- God loves persistence as a demonstration of our faith and obedience to his way.

