

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Apr 4th 2014

“When the just cry out, the Lord hears them, and from all their distress he rescues them.” Psalm 34

Some years ago I was in the midst of a family crisis and begging God for patience and guidance. The situation was out of my control and I was at wit's end about how to respond to it. So I turned to my parents for advice and got an email from my mom that I should have framed.

“You will never regret standing by your children,” she wrote. This didn't solve the problem per se but it helped me cope with it. It rescued me from the depths of panic. Although it took time to relieve my distress, I could feel God answering my prayers through the wisdom of my parents.

As I meditated on today's psalm – one of my favorites—it hit me how often God responds to our prayers through the actions of other people but we have to be alert to such signals as coming from God or we may think that God hasn't heard us crying out.

It takes a lot of faith to believe in the efficacy of prayer although surely everyone reading this reflection instinctively turns to it at times of distress. We've all experienced times when it seemed that our prayers were not answered. Someone we loved died too young from an illness. We didn't get the job we needed. Our children suffered a major difficulty etc.

But even at such times, God often uses people as his instruments to help ease our pain or help us find a new path. This is what the communion of saints is all about. I think of a period when I was coping with a major betrayal and almost miraculously every time I needed a different person to help, he or she appeared. Coincidence? More like heaven-sent.

Of course we have to listen to the promptings of the spirit when it is OUR turn to be an instrument of God's love and healing as the Prayer of St. Francis so wonderfully reminds us. If you haven't prayed it recently, do so in light of today's readings. It sheds so much light on them.

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