

Here's a little bit of trivia for the younger people. Did you know that, before the 1960's, the United States didn't have a universal number for people to call if they needed help from the police or fire department? I know it's hard to believe but people had to actually know the phone number for each department in the area they were currently in. They couldn't even ask Siri for the number because she hadn't been invented yet. It wasn't until 1968 that 9-1-1 was designated as the national emergency number.

By a show of hands, who here has ever called an emergency number like 9-1-1 before? If you raised your hand, chances are, thinking about that call brings to mind some traumatic experience. Sorry about that. In any case, hopefully, 9-1-1 isn't the most frequently dialed number in your phone. Who here calls the same person at least two times a day? It's probably a spouse, a child, a parent, a friend, or a business partner. Who we call and how often we call them says a lot about the priorities in our lives.

Now, here's two more important questions to think about: How would you describe your own acts of calling on God in prayer? Are they emergency calls, or are they frequent calls? We're very good at making emergency calls to God. We pray to God to get us out of the mess we find ourselves in. We pray to God to heal us or someone we know. We pray to God to help us pass a big exam. We pray to God to help us ace a job interview.

In today's Gospel, Jesus reminds us that we need to make frequent calls to God, not just emergency calls. Quite frankly, He's telling us that we're weak pray-ers. Sometimes, we can give up on God too easily. We tend to lose interest in praying because nothing seems to happen. We pray and God seems silent. We pray and God seems to ignore us. We think that just because He doesn't answer us in the way we expect Him to, He isn't answering us at all.

And so we stop praying. That's natural enough. In our world, if a person works hard and gets no pay and no reward, then that person stops working. We just don't do things that have no result. That type of behavior, when it comes to our prayer life, shows a lack of faith, a short-sighted view of God.

The good news is that Jesus gives us the remedy for our weakness. We must have unlimited faith and trust in God. No prayer that we utter goes unheard. God is never out of His office. He's never on vacation. He's always waiting and longing for us to bombard Him with our prayers. He's eagerly searching for hearts that trust Him enough to ask Him unceasingly for everything they need. He always answers our prayers, even when the answer is "no". Because God is our Father, all-wise, all-loving, and all-powerful, there should be no limit to our persistence in prayer to Him.

And so, as Saint Luke tells us, we should "pray always without becoming weary." We should be persistent in our prayer, just like the widow with her petitions to the judge, just like Moses interceding for victory in the battle against the Amalekites. We should be persistent in thanksgiving, persistent in repentance, persistent in praise, and persistent in bringing to God every need that comes our way. Persistence built on trust in God is the path to becoming better pray-ers.

Saint Monica is one of history's most famous pray-ers - the perfect example of persistence in prayer. Her son, Saint Augustine, was a brilliant student with a promising future among the intellectuals of the Roman Empire. She had tried to bring him up in the Christian faith, but when Augustine came of age, he informed his mother that he had become an anti-Christian pagan. The news devastated her and broke her heart. Things even worsened as he

became a womanizer and lived a life of great sin. It seemed that her oldest son was a spiritual lost cause.

But she didn't give up on him. She spared no efforts to save him. Day after day, year after year, she prayed for him. Many times she spent entire nights in prayer. And when she did allow herself a few hours of rest, she cried herself to sleep. Nothing seemed to help. Only after ten years of unceasing prayer, darkness, and frustration was her prayer finally answered: her son came back to the Church and became one of history's holiest and most influential saints. Looking back, every one of her prayers during those ten years had been answered by God. He was just saying, "Not yet."

Above all, it's necessary for each of us to spend some time every day alone with God, praying a decade of the Rosary, praying for our loved ones, or reflecting on a passage from the Bible. As our second reading tells us, all scripture is inspired by God and useful for training in righteousness. Prayer gives order and direction to our lives and it's much easier than we think to follow Jesus' instructions to "pray always without becoming weary."

If God really is someone important to us, which He is, that's why we're here today – we'll make a point of spending time with Him in prayer outside of Mass. We may think we're too busy being busy to pray but God has designed prayer to be flexible enough to fit into everything else we do. God is always thinking of us, always guiding us, like a mother with her toddler, or a coach with his players on the practice field. And so, we really can always pray. Maybe not while we're actually in a meeting - but when we take a break from preparing for the meeting. Maybe not while we're doing our homework - but while we're going to and from school. Maybe not while we're actually swinging the golf club - but while we're walking back to the cart.

Our days are filled with a thousand little moments when we're alone with ourselves.

Jesus wants to be part of those moments. He wants to share in those moments with us, because He wants to share His life with us - as He will prove once again today by coming to us in the Eucharist.

Brothers and sisters, God is more than a paramedic who shows up at our door with first-aid. He wants to build a relationship with us, but He needs our help to sustain it. There was an alarming question for each of us at the end of our Gospel today. Maybe you missed it. “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?” Look at the news, this question is as appropriate today as it was in the early Church when people were abandoning their faith to return to their former way of life. For us to be able to answer this question with a resounding “yes”, God has to be more than our emergency contact. He has to be the most frequently dialed number in our daily lives.