

Never Alone in Prayer

A Sermon Preached at Calvary Episcopal Church in Flemington, New Jersey
By Father William Thiele on the 7th Sunday of Easter (Mothers' Day) , May 12th, 2024

Jesus prayed, "Holy Father, keep them in thy name, which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one." +

Great things come at a price, and Jesus would soon be paying it on the cross. Meanwhile, he knew that his heavenly Father would hear his prayer.

So Jesus urgently prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane that evening before his arrest and crucifixion. He wouldn't be alone that night, and we don't have to be alone either.

He prayed for himself, but even with the stress he himself was under, he still prayed for his disciples. He asked, "Holy Father, keep them in thy name, which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one."

Jesus' mission to reconcile Heaven with fallen humanity on Calvary's cross was a really hard one. Afterwards he rose from the dead, affirming his power over the grave. Easter offers proof of our sure and certain hope of the resurrection.

But saints and martyrs also engage in holy missions. The work continues to be hard, but victory comes, whether on this side of Heaven or with the Lord on the other side.

Many people, whether famous or unknown, have stories and prayers concerning their own holy missions. Today we'll talk about just two, Jesus and mothers.

Year B, Easter 7:

The Holy Gospel John 17:6-19

"I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them to me, and they have kept thy word. Now they know that everything that thou hast given me is from thee; for I have given them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from thee; and they have believed that thou didst send me. I am praying for them; I am not praying for the world but for those whom thou hast given me, for they are thine; all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to thee. Holy Father, keep them in thy name, which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. While I was with them, I kept them in thy name, which thou hast given me; I have guarded them, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth. As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth.

Epistle 1 John 5:9-13

If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has borne witness to his Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. He who does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne to his Son. And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son of God has not life. I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

First Lesson Acts 1:15-17, 21-26

In those days Peter stood up among the brethren (the company of persons was in all about a hundred and twenty), and said, "Brethren, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David, concerning Judas who was guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was numbered among us, and was allotted his share in this ministry. So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection." And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, "Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two thou hast chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside, to go to his own place." And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was enrolled with the eleven apostles.

Jesus in Gethsemane prayed, “Holy Father, keep them in thy name, which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.”

Mary’s mission was hard. She had to give birth, raise and love a divine child. Later she would see him on the cross. She undoubtedly prayed a lot. Maybe she could have prayed about the same thing as her son did. “Holy Father, keep Jesus in thy name, which you have given me, that he may be one with you and with me.”

The holy mission of mothering fell not just to Mary. All mothers share in it. None should reject the mandate to mother just because the job can have real difficulties that come along with its wonderful joys.

Mothers might also parallel Jesus’ prayer saying, “Holy Father, keep my children in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one with you and with me.”

Mothering is hard to do alone, and it can get much harder without the Lord’s help. Children also need faith in the Lord and have the nurturing of parents. The question is too often asked, “Where are the fathers?” And sometimes the question can be, “Where are the mothers?”

In his prayer Jesus also prayed, “I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world.” Mothers on their holy missions might similarly pray, “I have taught my children whom you have given me out the world all about you.” Mothers can be like gateways to Heaven.

Jesus also prayed, “While I was with them, I kept them in thy name, which thou hast given me; I have guarded them, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled.”

Mothers build foundations for their children that will sustain them from one generation to another. They might reflect Jesus’ prayer by praying, “While I was with my children, I kept them in your name, which you gave me; I guarded them, and none of them were lost except for such situations that were impossible to remedy.”

These are a few examples from Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane. They show his outpouring of selfless love. Even in this dark time he wasn’t alone. We need not be alone either.

Jesus remained mindful of his disciples and others. From the cross he would commended the care of his mother to John. We can see such love and mindfulness in our mothers.

“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.” (*Ps 30:5*) The darkest nights give way to the joy of resurrection mornings. That’s the message of Easter, and of all those who are on holy missions. Today, we particularly honor our mothers.

**Jesus prayed in agony before his crucifixion, “Holy Father, keep them in thy name, which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.” This is love. May such love be reflected here at Calvary Church.
AMEN +**