

Further thoughts on Intercession

Over the past few months several people have asked me about intercession – sometimes it feels so pointless when prayers do not seem to be answered, or trivial when we ask for personal things. Why ask? Didn't Our Lord himself say, "Your Father knows what you need before you ask."? And yet, when the disciples asked him to teach them to pray he taught them what has become known as *The Lord's Prayer*, and this prayer is mainly petition (intercession) – beginning and ending with praise. "Your will be done" – that seems to be the crux of the matter – aligning our will with his to make a channel through which God can act.

It is a lifetime's work, this aligning of our wills with his – it grows with maturity and a willingness to look at oneself and discover where the blocks are. It was not without reason that Our Lord said, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." He could have said, Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall be open to God's touch – his will. It is an amazing thought that God will not force his will on humanity. He gave us free will and he seems therefore to need our co-operation in order to act. For those who are getting on in years and maybe feel rather useless, it is good to realise that perhaps as far as intercession goes these are your most important and fruitful years. Our Lord's most powerful intercession was while he was hanging helpless on the Cross.

Another quote, this time from St Paul, seems appropriate here: "We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will" (*Romans 8: 26 & 27*)

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