



The Armor of Faith

Topic Summary: Prayer and the Holy Spirit – Part I



L'Angelus - Jean-Francois Millet
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Introduction

[Greeting:] → Welcome to “The Armor of Faith,” a show where we hope to bring our listeners closer to the Word of God and the blessings we receive through living in the fullness of the Catholic faith. My name is Doug and I will be your host as we discuss the blessings of the Church Christ built upon Peter.

I am joined today by my panel: [names]

Our panelists provide support and catechesis for religious formation at St. Philip Benizi Catholic Mission in Cedaredge CO. Our panelists are also in the process of discernment and study to become lay Dominicans who are also known as the Order of Preachers. So, welcome to our panelists as well as our listeners.

Let us open with a prayer:

Heavenly Father, we lift up our hearts in thanks and praise for this opportunity to open and share your Holy Word this day. We pray that You are with us and all our listeners as we share with one another the blessings of faith. We pray You will grant us wisdom and understanding as we seek to learn Your Holy Truth.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit we pray.

Before we begin our discussion, I would like to mention that we have created an email through which you, our listeners, can provide us with comments, questions, or topic requests. The email is armoroffaithradio@gmail.com. Your feedback is important to us, as we want to help answer questions of faith. We cannot promise to answer every message we receive, but we will use your feedback as a means to select topics for our future shows. So, again, the email is armoroffaithradio@gmail.com.

Discussion: The concept of prayer is interwoven into our lives. It is part of our speech with idioms such as “with hope and a prayer,” or “we will keep you in our prayers,” or “you don't have a prayer.” Such idioms are found even within the secular society of speech and are exchanged as pleasantries or in sympathy. The atheist and the cynic would tell is that we invented prayer as a means to appear to do something, in response to what ever trial, challenge, or tragedy which presents itself, such that we will

not feel guilty when we really have nothing of substance to offer.

Chances are we first heard about prayer in our youth. If we were in a family which attended church, we may have heard about prayer there, but if our family stayed home on Sundays, then, we may have heard about it from an extended family member, friends, strangers, or through some form of media, be it magazines, books, movies, TV, or the Internet.

Perhaps, as we first learned about prayer, we were tempted to use it as a means to bargain with God for whatever our desire. We are told prayer can be very powerful and that it is important that we spend time in prayer, but do we truly understand why? Some have a prayer life and place a priority upon on it to ensure it is always part of their day while others find themselves praying almost purely by accident. We have heard the cliché. "There are no atheists in fox holes." Many unbelievers have been found reaching out in prayer at the times of their darkest hours, when they no longer appear to have any hope other than that which might be provided by a miracle.

Even if we have a very sophisticated prayer life, we should ask ourselves the question, do we understand what prayer is? Of course, that is why we have our panel here today so they can share their thoughts with us.

(Question: So let me ask, what do you believe prayer to be?)

In the Old Testament, the revelation of prayer comes between the fall and the restoration of man, that is, between God's sorrowful call to his first children: "Where are you? . . . What is this that you have done?" and the response of God's only Son on coming into the world: "Lo, I have come to do your will, O God." **Prayer is bound up with human history, for it is the relationship with God in historical events.** (CCC - 2567)

"Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God" (St. John Damascene). (CCC: 2590)

"This is how you are to pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and do not subject us to the final test, but deliver us from the evil one. (Matthew 6:9-13)

(Question: As we examine how Jesus asked us to pray, we see several components:

- Adoration of our Father in heaven
- Deference to His will
- Petition of sustenance
- Petition of forgiveness
- Petition of protection

What do these elements reveal to us about prayer?)

There is no other way of Christian prayer than Christ. Whether our prayer is communal or personal, vocal or interior, it has access to the Father only if we pray "in the name" of Jesus.

The sacred humanity of Jesus is therefore the way by which the Holy Spirit teaches us to pray to God our Father. (CCC: 2664)

(Question: Why does the Catechism assert we may only lift our prayers up to the Father through Jesus?)

*Jesus said to him [Thomas], “I am the way and the truth and the life. **No one comes to the Father except through me.** If you know me, then you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”* (John 14:6-7)

*Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father. **And whatever you ask in my name, I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.** If you ask anything of me in my name, I will do it.* (John 14:12-14)

*It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that **whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you.*** (John 15:16)

*So you also are now in anguish. But I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you. On that day you will not question me about anything. Amen, amen, I say to you, **whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you.** Until now you have not asked anything in my name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete.* (John 16:22-24)

(Observation: After all we have said about prayer, there are times where we do not get the answer we expect. I bring this up, as there was a time when a young Captain who worked for me expressed to me that he no longer believed in God, because he prayed that God would save his father, but his father was taken from him. I had no words for him. I was still young in my understanding of faith and I simply did not know what to say.

Many years later, I found myself facing a similar situation. My daughter suffered from brain cancer. Though she survived well beyond what the statistics say should have been her fate, the cancer eventually returned. I prayed and and I asked that an army of prayers be lifted up to the Lord, but the day came that she passed from this world. Now, the question was not about how to answer someone else – the question was for me – but, then, it was not only for me, it was for an entire faith community which ministered to her during the course of her affliction. Because of this, I felt the need to answer this question as part of her eulogy. I would like to take a moment and share it with you now.

Stephanie



Stephanie Anne (Bonebrake) Norman was born on 25 Jul 1985, in a small hospital in Jacksonville, AL, near Fort McClellan. She passed away on 7 Jan 2017, in the home once lived in by her grandmother.

Unfortunately for her, mine was the first face Stephanie saw as she opened her eyes for the first time outside the womb of her mother. Stephanie made her presence known in her first minutes after birth, causing one nurse to comment, "This one has an attitude." She was always a strong willed child, which often caused us to joke about who was the real mommy of our household.

Some of you may be wondering why I am wearing this uniform given this is not a military service. It is true, she was not a soldier of our nation, but I wear it because she asked me to wear it at her wedding. It represented more than half her life at the time. It represents the environment that shaped her experiences, her values and who she grew up to be. It also represents the courage by which she fought the cancer that finally took her from us.

As a young girl scout, Stephanie led a project to erect a peace pole on an American military installation in Bad Kreuznach, Germany. It was planted in honor of the American soldiers who deployed to help bring peace to the war torn region of Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was a reminder that, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." Stephanie may have not been a soldier of our nation, but, I can testify she was, and I believe still is, a soldier of God.

I could go on for days about Stephanie's talents and how she loved to dance and sing. She appeared in three productions presented at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, performing as part of the dance chorus in the productions of "Sweet Charity," "Anything Goes," and "Beauty and the Beast." One of my greatest joys was listening to her sing. I particularly enjoyed singing with her at mass. Her voice next to mine more than made up for the sins of my own singing.

When I asked my wife Sharon, "What do you believe to be the theme of Stephanie's life," Sharon responded without hesitation, "Prayer." Stephanie had a devotion to the rosary and was always saying novenas. A novena is a form of prayer and worship which is said over a period of nine days on behalf of a person or special need of our church or society. It requires a certain amount of discipline to remember and set aside time each day for reflection and the prayers of the novena. Stephanie would often call us and ask us to join her in one novena or another. It was not uncommon for Stephanie to be engaged in as many as five novenas at a time for the needs and blessings of others. When she was in high school, she once told me it was her job to worry for others.

During this journey to where we are now, I must tell you that I saw the fingerprints of God in so many places. I saw His face in the faces of those who offered help, those who prayed for and with Stephanie, those who brought her communion, as well as strangers who opened doors; and one young man, whom I do not know, nor will I ever forget his compassion as he knelt beside Stephanie's wheel chair, kissed her hand, and placed in her lap this prayer card. I see the face of God, even now, in all of you and all who have shared their prayers and their condolences.



ORACIÓN

ACUERDATE, ¡Oh Nuestra Señora del Sagrado Corazón!, del inefable poder que tu Hijo divino te ha dado sobre su Corazón adorable. Lleno de confianza en tus merecimientos, vengo a implorar tu protección.

¡Oh Tesorera celestial del Corazón de Jesús!, de ese Corazón que es el manantial inagotable de todas las gracias y que puedes abrir a tu gusto, para derramar sobre los hombres, todos los tesoros de amor y de misericordia, de luz y de salvación que encierra.

Concédeme, te lo suplico, el favor que ahora te pido... (aquí se hace la petición). ¡Oh Nuestra Señora del Sagrado Corazón! acoge benignamente mi ruego y dignate despacharlo favorablemente. Amén.

¡Nuestra Señora del Sagrado Corazón!. Ruega por nosotros.

Iglesia de Nuestra Señora del Sagrado Corazón
Av. López Mateos y Colomos
Chapultepec Country - Guadalajara, Jal.

Prayer

Remember, O Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, of the ineffable power of your divine Son has given you about your adorable Heart. Full of confidence in your merits, I come to implore your protection.

Oh heavenly treasurer of the Heart of Jesus, that Heart which is the inexhaustible source of all graces and that you can open it to your liking, to pour out upon men, all the treasures of love and mercy, of light and salvation.

Grant me, I beseech you, that now I ask... (here make your request). Oh Our Lady of the Sacred Heart! Graciously welcomes my plea and deign to dispatch favorably. Amen.

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart!. Pray for us.

As I reflect, I know it was a combination of her faith and courage which brought Stephanie through her first surgery and recovery. We saw the miracle of prayer as Stephanie seemed to beat all the odds. We saw the power of prayer with Clara, for with the chemo and the radiation, Stephanie should not have been able to conceive. Though Clara came to us more than a month early, we once more saw the power of prayer as Clara survived her premature birth and is now a strong and healthy child. Though I know Stephanie will constantly look over her baby girl from heaven, Stephanie will be dependent upon all of us to provide the hands and feet for Clara's care, as well as the environment in which Clara may be raised with the blessings of love and faith in our Lord.

Despite the tribulations Stephanie endured, her faith remained strong. During her last months, Stephanie asked us to take her to daily mass. Though she struggled to find the words she needed to communicate with us, because of the cancer and side effects of the pharmaceuticals, we were amazed that while she was at mass, she was able to say her prayers and responses clearly and without hesitation. We could feel the peace she felt in the presence of Jesus.

We might be tempted to ask, then, why was such a good and faithful soul taken from us? I should point out that I received a warning a couple of months ago by someone who did not know me or the struggle in which we were engaged. They related that when we lose someone, we must be wary of Satan's attack. I was reminded that when we are hurt and vulnerable, the evil one comes to sow doubt within our hearts. He puts the temptation before us to cry out, "What good was our prayer?"

I know there are those who will question, how could I love a God who has allowed someone I love so dearly to be taken from me? I can only tell them, I do not see as God sees. I only see the pain of the moment. Though I may imagine what will come in the future, I do not know, with any certainty, what it holds. The only power I have is the choice I make in the moment based upon the context of what I have learned and what I perceive. We must remind ourselves, from time to time, that God sees all in heaven and on earth and across all the generations. We can only trust that what He allows is for a greater good to come.

As a young women stepping into adulthood, Stephanie selected St. Therese of Lisieux as her patron saint. We choose patron saints as someone who will inspire us and pray for us from heaven. They are

the holy ones who found and pursued a path of virtue during their time on earth. Interestingly, many years later, when my mother decided to become Catholic, she also chose St. Therese to be her patron saint. and it is not lost upon me that the patron saint of the diocese in which Sharon and I now live is also St. Therese, therefore, I have asked that St. Therese be the patron saint for my family.

Like Stephanie, St Therese passed away at a young age. St. Therese was known for her, “Little Way,” which is a means to serve God in simple ways and through the ordinary tasks of our lives accomplished with the blessings of love and prayer. St. Therese said shortly before her death, “My mission to make God loved will begin after my death. I will spend my heaven doing good on earth.” I believe Stephanie now has the opportunity to join the efforts of her patron saint through her continued devotion to prayer.

And so, there remains a question before us, what will we do with the seeds of love Stephanie planted within each of us? Will we water it, will we nurture it, will we help it grow? Will we share it with one another? Will we use it to guide our lives? Will we use it to forgive as we seek to be forgiven? Most importantly, will we allow it to guide our relationship with God?

If we do not, then, the alternative is to allow ourselves to be consumed by the ways of the world, ways of selfishness, ways which allow love to wither and die. We only need to read the newspapers to see what that yields; therefore, I call upon you to choose love. As you do, I suspect our Father in Heaven will tap Stephanie upon the shoulder and say to her, “Well done, my good and faithful servant, for the seeds of love you planted within so many hearts.” And should any of us struggle in our choices, I suspect Stephanie will be praying for us, just as she did for so many while she was with us.

We must not allow Satan to rob us of the opportunity to see Stephanie's smile once more. More importantly, we must not allow Satan to rob us of the embrace of God. I would also tell you, weep not for my daughter, but weep for our time here, for where Stephanie is now is without the pain, suffering and evil of this world.

And so, I commit the soul of my daughter to the hands of God, after all, as a beautiful child of His creation, she has always been His. Sharon, myself, and her husband Mike, were simply blessed for the time God entrusted her to us. Now, I lift up my heart in thanks and praise that through the love of the only begotten Son of God, Stephanie may be forgiven her sins, cleansed of her iniquities, and will have her robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb so she may receive the embrace of God and walk forever within His kingdom where love is shared by all, where there is no pain or affliction, and where evil is not allowed to follow. I pray my daughter shall forever receive the peace and love of the Lord, for if Stephanie receives God's love and peace, what more could I ask for my daughter?



(Question: So this was my eulogy for Stephanie. So, now I ask you – Does God hear our prayers?)

Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone in good spirits? He should sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint [him] with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven. (James 5:13-15)

(Observation: Note, the verse says, “...the prayer of faith will save the sick person...” We may assume this means from death in this world, but the verse continues, “...and the Lord will raise him up.” In other words, the person will be saved, not necessarily from the illness, but from eternal death. The salvation is one which is more important, the salvation we receive in heaven.)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and God of all encouragement, who encourages us in our every affliction, so that we may be able to encourage those who are in any affliction with the encouragement with which we ourselves are encouraged by God. For as Christ’s sufferings overflow to us, so through Christ does our encouragement also overflow. (2 Corinthians 1:3-5)

Final Thoughts: As I reflect, I find the progression of my family with the saints a rather interesting story. St. Therese, for example, influenced my family in many ways, but one thing I noted is that St. Therese said, “My mission to make God loved will begin after my death. I will spend my heaven doing good on earth.” In the last months of the life of my daughter, Sharon and I began to discern becoming part of a third order and the doors were opened to us through the Dominicans. As we learned about St. Dominic, we learned that he, too, looked beyond his work on earth. He said as he was dying, “Do not weep, for I shall be more useful to you after my death and I shall help you then more effectively than during my life.” (St. Dominic)

For all who have lost a loved one, and perhaps struggle in understanding the moment, we should keep this in mind, our life, our work, and our prayers do not end as we pass from this world. Do our prayers reach heaven? Perhaps Revelation 5:7-8 will provide us some insight. It reads, “*He came and received the scroll from the right hand of the one who sat on the throne. When he took it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each of the elders held a harp and gold bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of the holy ones.*”

There are many ways our prayers are lifted to heaven; by intercession, by the angels, and by our thoughts and voices lifted up to the Lord, but we can always trust He hears every one. We may not always understand the answer to our prayers in the moment, but if we understand the great glory, love, and mercy of God, then, we will trust that what He allows is always for a greater good to come.

Wrap Up: Well, our time has come to an end. We hope you will be able to join us next week as we continue our discussion on Prayer and the Holy Spirit.

Let us conclude with a prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for this opportunity to open and discuss Your Holy Word. We pray that as we go our separate ways, You will continue to walk

with us and help us to see how we may put on the armor of **truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation**, and the **Word** of the gospel not only for the benefit of our lives, but also the lives of all who cross our path. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Thank you all and God bless.

Next Session: Prayer and the Holy Spirit – Part II.