



Raquette Lake Chapel Sunday Reflection September 27, 2020

Sunday Reflection Quote: “Pray often. Use words if necessary.” (attributed to St. Francis)

Why pray at all during the disasters in our country today?

“But why pray at all? Does not God, if there is One, know what has happened? Does He stand in need of prayer to enable Him to do His duty?” These words were recorded many years ago, and yet we still hear them today. The simple answer is: “No, God needs no reminder. He is within everyone and everything. Nothing happens without His permission.” And so I recall St. Francis’s remark to the young monk: “What are YOU doing about it?”

So what is or should prayer be about. I won’t attempt to summarize all the main Christian theories about prayer in this short message. I can throw this out: when people are down, they pray to God to lift them up. “God is the Help of the helpless,” says a Tamil proverb.

And yet there is more to prayer.

With any disaster, human effort must be a presence. Those who are left behind need help. We know that whatever comforting, healing, rebuilding, and so forth that can be done will be done: all that’s needed will be attempted. But all this cannot be a substitute for prayer. Our prayers should accompany our physical efforts. Prayers are a reminder to ourselves that we are helpless without God’s support. No effort is complete without prayer, without a definite recognition that the best human endeavor is of no effect if it does not have God’s blessing behind it.

Prayers begin as personal and heart searching. The human response of action and prayer in any disaster has two parts: repentance and purification. This is not the same as “finding the silver lining in every dark cloud”: this is no call for superficiality. Prayer is a call to humility. It is a call to self-purification - “getting my own act together” if you will - and repentance. What do we, individually and collectively, need to turn away from and turn to? Those answers are a result of our inward search.

Self-repentance and self-purification allow us to join our communities in prayer that we may discern the purpose of God for each of us during disastrous times. We can then be humbled, “re-oriented” and ready to share the sufferings and support family and our fellows whoever they may be.

Our prayers: what work do each of us need to do to help our communities during these times? Prayers of thanks for Ron’s encouraging test results. Prayers of healing for Chris, Cynthia, and Howard. Prayers of comfort for the victims of COVID-19 and fires in the Western US. Prayers for all first responders. Prayers to end the divisiveness and violence in our country and focus on God’s kingdom.

And may the peace which passes all understanding be with you this day and forever. Amen – Vance

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