Good Morning,

This morning I wanted to take a few moments to reflect with you on the topic of prayer. I appreciate the words of John Mott who once wrote, “Prayer is the greatest force we can wield. It is the greatest talent God has given. He has given it to every Christian. What right have we to leave unappropriated or unapplied the greatest force which God has ordained for the salvation and transformation of humanity.” As you can well imagine, I’m a strong believer in prayer. I have seen prayer change lives. I have experienced the transformation of marriages through prayer. I have seen people healed through prayer. For me, life experiences have been the clear evidence that prayer works.

An unknown author once stated, “Much kneeling keeps us in good standing with God. We cannot stumble when we are on our knees. A Christian on their knees sees more than a philosopher on tiptoes.” As you can well imagine as someone with a philosophy degree this quote gives me pause for thought. I have tremendous respect for the great philosophers over the generations. And yet I acknowledge that our connection with Christ takes us much further than relying on our own thoughts and philosophies.

I take comfort in the words of Dr George Washington Carver who once said, “My prayers seem to be more of an attitude than anything else. I indulge in no lip service, but ask the Great God silently, daily, and often many times a day, to permit me to speak to him. I ask him to give me wisdom, understanding and bodily strength to do his will. Hence, I am asking and receiving all the time.” I have come to believe that my spirit is in agreement with scripture, that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. But I can do very little good without him. There is an interesting phrase worth our consideration from an anonymous author who wrote, “We can pray, believe, and receive or we can pray, doubt, and do without.” I’m deeply grateful that our prayer life is always changing and that we are always growing and that God is always responding.

I’m not sure if you’re aware but there is a strong prayer team that meets monthly in this parish. Each month they come together to pray for those who are sick, lonely, depressed, anxious, unemployed, in crisis or in recovery. It’s a small grout that comes together not to gossip but to pray. I believe they make a significant difference in the life of this parish. It’s not the number of people that compose the group that’s important, but rather the faithfulness of the group to come together and approach the throne of grace in prayer. There is a wonderful story about a woman who invited many neighbours and friends to a prayer meeting. Only 5 came. She was very disappointed and discouraged. In a conversation with her pastor, she said, “I invited 25 people and only 5 came.” The pastor responded, “Praise the Lord. In reality you had 2 more than you needed to claim the sure promise, “For where 2 or 3 are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them.””

Several years ago, I received a desperate call from my sister. She and her husband had been to visit the doctor. She shared with me that a series of tests revealed some abnormalities with the fetus. She and her husband were crushed. The doctors could not predict what would happen with the baby. They could predict that there would be many complex issues. Our family began to pray. A few months later, Brandon was born. He fought for his life for almost 3 months in the hospital. Many members of the family held his tiny hand through the incubator. As time went by the doctors cautioned my sister and her husband that the situation was serious. We continued to pray. Eventually, a medical team chose to prepare Brandon’s parents for the worst case scenario. Brandon is still alive. It is true that Brandon is quadriplegic and that he has few communication skills. But you see, for my sister, the answer to her prayer was that she would have the opportunity to care for her son. Over the years I have watched her with Brandon and her love, compassion and kindness towards him has resulted in a teenager who smiles back at her every time she walks in the room.

The answer to prayer is different for everyone. I can’t tell you how God will answer your prayers this week. I can’t even tell you that he will answer your prayers this week. I am confident that he will answer and that it is His will to provide us with what we need, but not always what we want. So keep praying. There is an answer on the way.

Blessings

Fr Stephen