

Hom 7 Easter C 2019

In May 2001 journalist Giles Brandeth interviewed South African Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Tutu worked to end apartheid in South Africa a horrendous social structure which completely separated Blacks from Whites in every aspect of society and gave them little if any rights. Tutu, a Black man himself, struggled to avoid what could have become a Civil War by working for peace. He dedicated his life to bringing justice, peace, and a quality of life to the people of South Africa. He was internationally respected and received the Nobel peace prize. There were a million questions Brandeth wanted to ask Tutu. But the Archbishop had been diagnosed recently with prostate cancer, and Brandeth realized that this interview might be the last one Desmond Tutu would ever give. So he asked the Archbishop to choose the topic of conversation.

What would Tutu choose to talk about? Tutu had played a leading role in transforming his country's politics and had worked with the most powerful leaders around the world.

Those topics weren't Desmond Tutu's priority. He wanted to talk about prayer and adoration, about faith, hope and forgiveness." This great world leader wanted his final message to be about his faith in God. (1)

If you knew you would be dead in two hours what prayer would you offer up to God. Think about it for a moment. Wouldn't you focus on your truest priorities and most heartfelt desires?

The reason I mention this topic is because our Gospel story today offers us the last words of Jesus before he ascended to heaven.

His last words were a prayer to the Father in heaven, a prayer for us, for you and for me.

Listen to his words again: "[Father] My prayer is not for them alone [speaking of his disciples]. **I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message . . .**" Do you hear that? He is praying first of all for his disciples, and then he's praying "for those who will believe in [him] through their message . . ." That's us! Jesus' final prayer was for his disciples and for us. Why would Jesus pray for us?

Why do you think Jesus that the Lord's last prayer on earth was praying for you?

Jesus could see the wolf coming to steal the sheep. Jesus knew that all the powers in the world would work for one purpose----to destroy our unity, to destroy our faith, to destroy our relationship with God.

Jesus knew that if you and I are going to persevere in our Christian faith and if we are going to persevere in our efforts to share that faith with others then we will need to be holding on tight to the hand of God.

Imagine you are on a boat in a terrible storm and a wave has knocked you over and is sweeping you into the ocean----reach out and take the only hand that is extended to you. Reach out and hold fast to the hand of God in Jesus. You need him or you won't survive.

1. You have been given a big responsibility. It's not going to be easy. Jesus commanded you to go and tell the Good News, to bring others to Jesus. How do you bring others to Jesus in a society where it is not polite to talk about God? Jesus will be in you to give

you the words you need to speak.

2. How do you bring your own children to Jesus when you have soccer practice and dance class and music lessons to go to? Jesus is praying for you because you need God if you are going to bring your children to Jesus. If their faith is going to survive.
3. How do we persevere in our faith when all we hear about our religious leaders is how some of them have violated every moral and ethical code Jesus left us? Jesus is praying for us. We are not on our own. Jesus is with us to sustain our faith.
4. How do we persevere in our faith when there is general apathy, an indifference among not only our friends but our close family members, an indifference toward religion? Isn't it easier to give up on Christ and just join the rest of the world and practice no religion? Hold onto the hand of Jesus, stay close to him or the waves will sweep you off the boat.
5. How do we persevere in our faith when it seems that everyone else has failed? Our bishops and priests have failed us. Our pope has failed us. Our Catholic universities and high schools have failed us. The responsibility has fallen on you to pass on the story of Jesus to the next generation. Everyone else has failed. Jesus is praying for you. He will come and make his home within your heart that you may succeed in your mission.

Why pray for anyone at all? Because they need it. We need it. Jesus is praying for us. Jesus does not want us to be swept away into chaos and oblivion. The fact that God came to earth and lived and died on the Cross is going to be forgotten, swept away. The storm has come.

Reach out to God and grab his hand. Begin reading the bible. Begin setting aside time every day to pray. Take every opportunity to talk to

Jesus and to talk about Jesus. You're not alone. Jesus is praying for you. Let me conclude by sharing with you just three bible passages where Jesus is praying for you. JESUS PRAYS FOR UNITY — "Holy Father, keep [those whom You gave Me] in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one." [JOHN 17:10b-12]. Jesus prays for unity.

JESUS PRAYS FOR OUR JOY — "These things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world" [JOHN 17:13, 14]. Jesus prays for our joy.

JESUS PRAYS FOR OUR PROTECTION — "I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world" [JOHN 17:15]. Jesus prays for our protection.

Jesus can see the storm coming. All the powers of the world will conspire to destroy your faith. Jesus is praying for you. He wants you to succeed where others have failed. Open the door to your heart. He has sent the Holy Spirit to be with you. You're not alone.