

## **July 28, 2013: Prayer and Evangelization**

My brothers and sisters, truly, one of the most extraordinary Christian women of the last century was Edith Stein, a first rate German philosopher and convert to the Catholic faith. Shortly after her conversion Edith Stein entered religious life as a Carmelite nun and, while living the life of a cloistered nun, authored a number of scholarly and spiritual works on the faith. She and her sister, Rosa, likewise a convert, were arrested by the German Gestapo and transported to one of the Nazi death camps, Auschwitz, where they both suffered a martyr's death.

Early in her adult life, Edith was an unbeliever, an atheist. In her autobiography, she recalls a pivotal moment in her journey to the Catholic Church. Sometime in 1916, she and a companion entered the Catholic Cathedral of Frankfurt. She writes: "We stopped in at the cathedral for a few minutes; and, while we looked around in respectful silence, a woman carrying a market basket came in and knelt down in one of the pews to pray briefly. This was something entirely new to me. To the synagogues or to the Protestant churches which I had visited, one went only for services. But here was someone interrupting her everyday shopping errands to come into this church, although no other person was in it, as though she was there for an intimate conversation. I could never forget that."

Unknowingly, the praying woman with the market basket served as an evangelist and was instrumental in drawing an unbeliever to faith in Christ. In St. Luke's gospel, Jesus is often found praying, particularly in anticipation of some of the key events in His life (Baptism, choosing the twelve apostles, passion) He must have prayed with quiet intensity. In today's gospel (Lk. 11:2-13) the disciples observe Jesus praying. So fascinated are they by the Master at prayer, that they ask Jesus to teach them how to pray. Seeing a Holy man or woman praying can often make a profound impression on us.

What lessons can we derive from today's gospel reading?

First, develop a sense of god's presence. Several years ago a physician Dr. Larry Dossey wrote a book on the healing power of prayer. He recalled one of his patients who, at the time was suffering from a terminal illness. Whenever he visited him he would be praying with great conviction. Dr. Dossey was curious. So one day he asked his patient if he prayed to be cured of his disease. "No," he cried. Then why do you pray at all? Dr. Dossey asked. "To remind myself that I am not alone" the patient responded. Dossey was deeply impressed.

Second, we must pray with faith and confidence. Early in his ministry as an evangelist, Dr. Billy Graham was faced with a major crisis. After one of his revivals he was informed that he was running out of money. So Dr. Graham fell to his knees that night, praying, "Lord, if you wish my ministry to continue, please supply me with the necessary funds. I need fifty thousand dollars." The following day a complete stranger presented him with a check for the requested amount. Simply amazing!

Third, by expressing our willingness to pray publicly, we can inspire others to join us in witnessing to our faith in Christ. Recently I attended the wake of a twenty-two year old young man whose father was an elementary and high school classmate of mine. The young man's grandmother is now ninety nine years old.

When I was a young boy I recall seeing this woman each day, praying in the rear of the church. To this day I am convinced that she was instrumental in preparing me for my ultimate decision to seek to be ordained a priest of the Church. To say the least, she made an enormous impression on me!

Dear Lord, teach us how to pray!

Help us to pray often.

By our prayers may we inspire others to pray In the Name of Jesus.

Amen