

Homily 7 Easter Year B - Intercession

Many of our hymns, especially those that have their source in the Scriptures, make reference to Jesus as one who **intercedes** on our behalf. To intercede means to act as a 'go-between' or mediator. An intercessor is someone who makes themselves responsible for another person in some way.

If we take on someone's situation on their behalf we will find perhaps that considerable demands are put upon us; We can be drawn into their suffering - their loneliness, their pain, their debt. We can find ourselves being attacked because of our association with them. Those who are active on behalf of those whom society has marginalised or demonised have been threatened and abused, even violently.

When Jesus took on this role of intercession for humanity at the Incarnation he accepted the contingent suffering of sharing our experiences.

Even if we are not asked to bear another's burdens to this extent, still, taking on someone else's welfare can prove a heavy, even crushing, responsibility. Yet to do so is a way we can share in the crucifixion of our Lord, and so rise with Him to new life.

Our intercession for others is perhaps most commonly expressed in **prayer** - we commend others to the grace of God, especially those who are in obvious need.

Even intercessory prayer can become an intolerable burden. I knew a pious woman whose list of needy people to pray for grew and grew, day by day - and her bedtime became further and further delayed!

Our prayer can be *generally inclusive*. It is not necessary to dwell on each and every candidate.

Our prayer of intercession can be expressed by **actions** of 'expiation' - good work for the sake of another; even self-control, the exercise of patience or large-heartedness. St Therese of Lisieux offered the many 'irritations' of community life for missionaries! She is patron of the missions, yet she never left her convent.

We are not the **sole** intercessor - there are other people like us, also the angels, saints, and it has been suggested that the 'Holy Souls' in Purgatory may pray for us - as well as being recipients themselves of the blessings of our prayer.

We are not the **prime** intercessor. Jesus is the one who took on the burden of the world's pain. He is *the* mediator before God: *Our advocate who always pleads our cause*, as St Paul writes to Timothy (1 Tim 2:5).

We come to Mass to join our intercessory efforts with *His* to entrust all our cares to Him who *carries all our burdens* (Isaiah 53:6, 11, 12).

A final point. At its root our petition for *anyone* should be that **God may be glorified**. This was the desire of Jesus when he raised Lazarus from the tomb.

Whenever we seek the uplifting of anyone from their darkness and pain, it is the *glory of God* that we seek (not our own satisfaction; not even the relief of the sufferer). Our prayer is that, somehow, through our engagement with this person in their need, the love and life of God may be made more manifest in the world.

It is noteworthy that, as Jesus said, God was glorified more by Lazarus being brought back to life at His hands than if Lazarus had earlier been healed of his sickness.

If we seek the glory of God, as Jesus did, in our intercession, then perhaps we will find ourselves also agents of more wonderful results than we might have otherwise expected - greater signs of Divine Love.