

# PASTOR'S PERSPECTIVE – *'Sharing Wisdom for Personal Prayer'*

17 / 18 July 2010

Dear Friends

A week ago, the Brisbane Archdiocese sponsored a Conference on Prayer called Pray 2010. Fr Dave, Fr Abel and a few parishioners from St James were among the 2,800 people attending from all around Australia and overseas. What an extraordinary event! Somehow, prayer is at the heart of our living as God touches us and draws us to himself. The profound variety of prayer was reflected in 40 keynote presentations and 300 workshops during the conference – something for everyone.

The power of prayer was expressed in the focus of Pray 2010 – *Prayer... Gathers, Opens, Transforms, Sends!* This week and next, I'd like to share some experiences of Pray 2010 with you. Today, we reflect on some of the wisdom that relates to our personal prayer, and next week, some wisdom that touches us as a Praying Parish Community. Of course, prayer is very personal and each of us prays in his/her own personal way, yet there are some basic truths about prayer that guide us.

Much practical wisdom about prayer was shared during Pray 2010, especially the simplicity of prayer. Recall the simplicity of Jesus' prayer exemplified in his final words on the cross, *'Father, forgive them...'* and *'Into your hands, I commend my spirit!'* Our very desire for prayer is Jesus' own gift, not unlike the desire deep down for union with the one we love. Keynote speaker Dr Donna Orsuto, Professor at the Gregorian University in Rome, reminded us that God loves us so much that he is *'crazy about us'* (Catherine of Siena) and can't take his eyes off us.

A fundamental foundation for prayer is a close relationship with Christ, and we have every reason for confidence in being loved. Otherwise we can pray a lot and still do our own thing, fitting God's will into what we have decided. It may help to reflect on what God is doing for us in our prayer – *God gathers, opens, transforms, sends...* The following 'gems' may help our reflection:

- **'Enter', then, 'into your heart' (Is 46:8), and if you have faith, you will find Christ there. There he speaks to you. I, the preacher, must raise my voice, but he instructs you more effectively in silence. (St Augustine - Sermon 102, 2)**
- **Prayer helps us to understand God's will in the sense that prayer can bring acceptance of reality, make it bearable, NOT an acceptance of God's will as if God intended a tragic event to happen. God is in the reality. (Fr Laurence Freeman OSB)**
- **Prayer changes us. It is not magic – when prayer becomes 'magic', it tries to manipulate God and is not prayer. (Fr Laurence Freeman OSB)**

- Pray while you're able because we don't know what the future holds. (Cardinal Joseph Bernardin)
- Prayer always starts with God. Pray as we can, not as we can't! (Sr Hilda Scott OSB)
- More than ever, I find myself in the hands of God... there is a difference... the initiative is God's... let us put ourselves at his service. (Fr Pedro Arrupe SJ on his sickbed)
- Contemplation is a natural gift and meditation is the work we have to do to receive the gift. (Fr Laurence Freeman OSB).

*Fr Dave*