



## THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER IN OUR LIVES!

Dom Helder Camara, Archbishop of Recife-Olinde in the poverty stricken northeast of Brazil, was a very holy man who recognized every man and every woman as his brother and sister in Christ. He died in 1997. His door and his heart were open to everyone who approached.

Throughout his ministry, he maintained a schedule that would have killed most people. It took three teams of assistants to keep up with him. His day began at 2:00 A.M. when he was awakened by his alarm and he spent three hours in prayer, meditation, dealing with correspondence, and preparing talks. After another hour of sleep, he would begin his day which lasted well into the night. He said, "If I feed the poor, they call me a saint. If I ask why people are poor, they call me a communist." In the face of opposition and threats of his life, he continued his journey with Jesus. Imbued with the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, he initiated small faith communities to continue and broaden the ministry of the church. He set out to share his way of prayer with his brothers and sisters. Having learned that destitution is revolting and degrading, ruining the image of God in every human being, he shared his deep conviction of God's love with them. In his vigil, he strove to regain his unity with Christ. No need for words, just ideas. He remembered a poor woman he encountered and brought her to consciousness along with the needs of all the women he met, rich and poor, strong or weak, yesterday and throughout history. He stressed that "conversion ought to be ongoing since self-centeredness is ever living. They say it only dies a few hours after we ourselves die." Like Jesus, he would teach them to pray.

Surely, today's Gospel passage reflects a constant curriculum on the agenda of those invited to learn the ministry from Jesus and to continue his ministry after his death. They would learn to share his deep conviction of God's most intimate love. He shared his prayer life with them, informing them how he kept constant vigil with the Father. On the most difficult night of his life, he challenged them to keep vigil with him lest they fail the test.

**Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come.** In prayer we recognize the awesome holiness of God who wants to share his very life with us. It's not about us, it's about God. Jesus came to proclaim the reign of God and he calls his disciples to realize it. **Give us our daily bread.** Jesus invites us to the Eucharistic table where he is the bread of life. As we ask God to nourish us we must be ready to nourish our hungry sisters and brothers. **Forgive us and teach us to forgive those who sin against us.** Conversions ought to be going on every day since self-centeredness is ever living. We come to the table confessing that we have sinned and asking God and our sisters and brothers to forgive us. **Persistence.** The sisters and brothers of Abraham persist in pleading the cause of the innocent. We need to be persistent in our prayers. Dom Helder was as sure of Christ's existence as he was of his own hand with its five fingers he could touch and see. He met Jesus every day in the poor. And we are one. No doubt about it. **Giver of good gifts.** God loves us and wants to share with us the Spirit, the Lord and giver of life who is a gift of the Father and Son. The Holy Spirit is our contemporary, living with us and helping us. What could our weakness do in moments of crisis if not for the Spirit of God?

According to Dom Helder the central act in which the human and angelic families meet the Father is the holy Mass, understood not as a ritual of a specific sect, but as a cosmic and universal act in which Christ, the Priest of Creation, gathers together and brings to perfection in himself all things, and takes them back, in the Spirit, to the Father.

