Prayer is first and foremost in our lives as followers of Jesus. Everything we do and say must be embodied in a spirit of prayer.

In the life of prayer, our wills and God’s grace act together. When we pray, we must surrender to the will of God and not our own wills and wants. This can be difficult especially when we want our own way. Yet, we must remember that God wants what is best for us and His ways are greater than our ways. Only God can see the big picture.

At the very beginning of Francis’ conversion, he is living with a poor priest at the chapel of San Damiano. His parents do not know where he is, so his father goes around the city inquiring about his son. When he learns where Francis is, he calls together his friends and neighbors and goes down to San Damiano. Francis is still new in the service of Christ so when he hears about his pursuers and knows they are coming; he hides from his father’s anger by creeping into a secret cave which he has prepared as a hiding place. There he stays for a whole month. He eats food brought to him secretly and prays continually with tears that the Lord deliver him from persecution and grant him the fulfillment of his desire to serve him alone. He fasts and prays unceasingly, not trusting in his own strength but relying wholly on God; and God fills his soul with unspeakable joy and a wonderful light until, glowing with an inner radiance, he leaves the cave, ready to face his persecutors. Light of heart, he climbs the road to Assisi. When his friends and relatives notice him, they smother him with insults, calling him a fool and a madman, and they hurl stones and mud at him. But Francis, who has become God’s servant, pays them no heed. Indifferent to their insults, he thanks God for everything.

Initially, Francis hides from his father’s anger by creeping into a secret cave which he has prepared as a refuge. Like all of us at the beginning of the emergence of the true self, he fears his father’s anger, he draws inward and hides, and he prays for the wrong thing because he does not yet have the courage to become himself. He prays that the Lord will deliver him from persecution and grant him the fulfillment of his desire. He does not know yet that the fulfillment of his desire involves persecution.

But because he perseveres, the Lord fills his soul with light, and he leaves the cave where he is hiding and faces the insults and blows of his persecutors. In overcoming his shame, he discovers his true self and is unmoved by persecution. And he thanks God for everything, not just for what is pleasant, such as his misguided desire to be delivered from persecution. In acting, in facing the consequences of his commitment to Christ, Francis learns to pray correctly.

[From the Way of St. Francis by Murray Bodo, OFM]
Psalm Fragment:
“The Lord has heard my supplication;  
The Lord will receive my prayer.” – Psalm 6:9

Reflection Question:  
Do you pray for your will alone or for your will to meet God’s grace?

Action for this week:  
Pray that your will and God’s grace will always meet – making you an instrument of the Lord’s peace.

Prayer for the Week: The Peace Prayer

Lord, make me a channel of your peace;  
where there is hatred, I may bring love;  
where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness;  
where there is discord, I may bring harmony;  
where there is error, I may bring truth;  
where there is doubt, I may bring faith;  
where there is despair, I may bring hope;  
where there are shadows, I may bring light;  
where there is sadness, I may bring joy.

Lord, grant that I may seek rather to comfort than to be comforted;  
to understand, than to be understood; to love, than to be loved.

For it is by self-forgetting that one finds.  
It is by forgiving that one is forgiven.  
It is by dying that one awakens to eternal life. Amen.

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