

## Ordinary 15C - July 13, 2025

### Neighborly Prayer

Some of you may be familiar with a story by journalist Tom Junod. It is a true story of a young man afflicted with cerebral palsy. Cerebral palsy did not affect this young man's mind, but it affected his motor skills and his ability to speak. The boy could only communicate through typing on his computer. In addition to his physical disabilities, the boy suffered emotional problems after some of his care givers callously abused him. Overwhelmed with self-hatred, the boy often hit himself. Using his computer, he wrote to his mother that he wished he could die. There was one thing that seemed to bring the boy comfort: watching "Mr. Roger's Neighborhood." The kindly, mild-mannered Mr. Rogers emphasized that all people are valuable and worthy of love. His calming demeanor and accepting message touched the boy's heart and gave him hope.

One day a children's foundation set up a meeting between the boy and his hero, Mr. Rogers. Upon meeting Mr. Rogers, the boy became so nervous that he began hitting himself, and his mother had to take him to another room to calm him down. When he returned, Mr. Rogers carried on their conversation as if nothing had happened. And then Mr. Rogers ended the conversation by asking the boy a very special favor: would this boy pray for him? The boy was floored by this request. Would he pray for Mr. Rogers? He had always been the object of someone else's prayers. But from that day forward, the boy began praying for Fred Rogers, and he experienced a new sense of hope and self-esteem through this act of praying for a man he so admired.

When Tom Junod complimented Fred Rogers on this idea, Rogers reacted with surprise. He had been sincere in his request for the boy's prayers. As he said, "I didn't ask him for his prayers for HIM, I asked for me. I asked him because I think that **anyone who has gone through challenges like that must be very close to God.** I asked him because I wanted his intercession."

(by King Duncan from *Collected Sermons*, [www.Sermons.com](http://www.Sermons.com), adapted from Tom Junod, *Esquire*, November 1998)

### The Secret of Our Power to Love

Legend has it that a wealthy merchant traveling through the Mediterranean world looking for the distinguished Pharisee, Paul, encountered Timothy, who arranged a visit. Paul was, at the time, a prisoner in Rome. Stepping inside the cell, the merchant was surprised to find a rather old man, physically frail, but whose serenity and

magnetism challenged the visitor. They talked for hours. Finally the merchant left with Paul's blessing. Outside the prison, the concerned man inquired, "What is the secret of this man's power? I have never seen anything like it before."

Did you not guess?" replied Timothy. "Paul is in love."

The merchant looked bewildered. "In Love?"

"Yes," the missionary answered, "Paul is in love with Jesus Christ."

The merchant looked even more bewildered. "Is that all?"

Smiling, Timothy replied, "Sir, that is everything."

(by G. Curtis Jones from *Illustrations For Preaching And Teaching*, Nashville: Broadman, 1986, p. 225)

### **"The Member of This Church I Would Most Like to See in Hell."**

Several years ago, a pastor announced (via the sign board in front of his Church) that, come Sunday, he was going to preach on "*The Member of This Church I Would Most Like to See in Hell.*" What excitement he caused! What a crowd he drew! The church was filled with people who hadn't been there in ages.... kids who usually walked home after Sunday school.... the C and E crowd.... and a bunch of curious Presbyterians who wandered over from next door. Everybody was there. Well, when he finally called a name.... he really did call a name.... it was the name of everybody's favorite Sunday school teacher.

Then he went on to say that the reason he most wanted to see her in Hell was because he was sure that, in two or three weeks, given her saintly nature, Hell would be converted and emptied. He didn't say whether her primary means of accomplishing this would be passing out tracts or by handing out cups of cold water. But he left no doubt that her love of God and neighbor would not allow her to rest comfortably in her place while the rest of us fared miserably in ours.

### **The Best Treatment for Loneliness:**

Dr. Karl Menninger, the famous American psychiatrist, once gave a lecture on mental health and was answering questions from the audience. One man asked, "*What would you advise a person to do if that person felt a nervous breakdown coming on?*" Everyone there expected him to answer, "*Consult a psychiatrist.*"

To their astonishment he replied: "*Leave your house, go across the railroad tracks, find someone who is in need, and do something to help that person.*" (Quoted by Fr. Tony Kayala)