



Wednesday Prayer

18th Sunday after Pentecost – Praying, Listening, and Doing

“Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any among you cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They shall call for the elders of the church to pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord.” James 5:13-14

When I think of prayers and pray-ers (as in those who pray), Sister Donna is the first to come to mind. I met her at Centro Santa Catalina in the colonia of Panfilo Natera, a village built on the former city dump on the outskirts of Juarez, Mexico. Sister Donna was a Dominican Sister who was teaching theology in El Paso in the mid-90’s and, in her words “decided it was time to DO theology in addition to teaching it”. She was aware of the villages of very poor people in areas across the border who were struggling to support their families with the low wages received at the US factories built on the border. She was uncertain where to start, so she started by going to the colonia every week on her day off, walking the dirt paths that wound through the village, praying as she walked. Very slowly, after a year of following this practice, women in the village started walking with her, and she began to lead them in prayer and Bible study and listen to the cries of their hearts. This led to classes requested by the women, then tutoring for children, and a sewing and weaving cooperative that helps supplement the families’ incomes. Now, empowered by years of prayer, [Centro Santa Catalina](#) is also a center for advocacy and justice for women in Mexico.

Sister Donna didn’t start with an agenda of what she thought they needed. She started with prayer and asked for guidance. Fortunately, she was a very patient pray-er and a good listener. Prayer is not a quick fix or a magic wand. Praying, first and foremost, connects us to God. Through our connection to God, we’re empowered to connect to our neighbors and called to be God’s hands in outreach to those in need.

Prayer is not only one of the pillars of Cherish All Children, it is the first pillar, a critical foundation. Sister Donna sets a profound example for us – to pray patiently, open our hearts to God, and open our ears to cries of children and youth who are vulnerable to predators or who are survivors of exploitation. Empowered by prayer, we can join with our neighbors in education and advocacy as we move towards justice.

Loving God, we give thanks that you have heard the prayers of your people throughout the generations. With faith and trust, we open our hearts to you in prayer. Fill us with compassion as we lift up the prayers of those who are burdened and in need of healing, hope and justice. Amen.

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