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Say a Little Prayer

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Say a Little Prayer

Perhaps you have heard, or even said at some time: "Would you say a little prayer for . . . ?" Responses are usually, "Sure." But what is it that takes place in such a conversation, and what might a dialogue like this mean for us at the time, and even afterwards?

No two relationships are the same, and we think, feel, and act differently according to changing perceptions in every one of our many individual personal affiliations. With some persons, we can talk about God or religious topics, while with others, asking for prayers is the closest we can come to letting them know that we have a need for help that goes beyond what we expect to receive from one another. We speak to them of such a need because, however much we rely on God, we also look for the many kinds of support we can receive from the people we know and trust.

To ask for "a little prayer" is often the easiest means for carefully determining how safe it is to talk about a significant personal concern that warrants God's assistance. A respondent is free to address either or both points of the request: to enquire about the important issue that the one asking has in mind, and/ or to talk about the kind of prayer that is intended. For example, we could ask about the particular concern, and offer words of encouragement. Or, we could say that we will pray on behalf of the person who asks us. And, we can pick up on both aspects of the request, by talking about the individual's concern as well as experiences of prayer as they relate to some of the distressing situations we face.

To ask for a "little" prayer would seem to indicate that the person asking considers his or her difficulty of small importance, or does not want to inconvenience anyone, no matter what the gravity of the matter. We are familiar with this kind of courteous request which permits a recipient to respond kindly and with little involvement, or to reply with an offer to hear more about the thoughts, feelings, and concerns that lie behind the request. We can give reassurance that we care about the person with his or her particular difficulty, and that praying is no burden at all (if this is true.)

No matter how gently the topic of prayer might be introduced, if the one asking allows for a response rather than only mentioning his or her need and then literally or figuratively walking away, permission is granted for a bit of dialogue that implicitly includes the subject of communication with God. If we reflect a bit about what we mean when we reply to a request to "say a little prayer," we might be prepared to offer responses that are both more helpful and also personally satisfying.

If our relationship with God is analogous to that of members of a family or of friendships where we believe that we are loved, we can ask for assistance. We do not always expect that those who care for us can fix every situation, but we trust their support, and it makes a significant difference for us. We can ask God to be with us, and we can likewise ask God to be with those who ask for our prayers.

God is Love, and God of all people. We can "say a little prayer" anytime, anywhere, and on behalf of anyone, including ourselves.