**23rd SUNDAY [7th September, 2014]**

READINGS: Ezekiel 33:7-9/ Romans 13:8-10/ Matthew 18:15-20

THEME: TWO OR THREE IN THE LORD’S NAME

By Very Rev. Fr. John Louis ([http://frlouis.com](http://frlouis.com/))

It is not easy persevering in prayer alone. For this reason, the Lord encourages us to join hands with others in prayer. Remember that even the great man of God, Moses, had to be supported in prayer. An instance was when the Israelites battled with the Amalekites. As long as Moses raised his hands in prayer, the Israelites had the upper hand; but when his tired hands dropped down, his people were defeated. Hence, Aaron and Hur had to help to keep the old man’s hands up in prayer till the Israelites won the war (*cf*. Ex. 17:8-16). Similarly, we also need to join hands with others in prayer.

There is another Old Testament story which proves that prayer “in unity is strength”. In this case also, those united in prayer were three in number: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They were not burned by the fire of the furnace, because united in prayer, an angel of the Lord came into their midst to cool off the heat (Dan. 3:26-30). Similarly, according to today’s gospel reading, there is a spiritual strength for people praying together in Jesus Christ. And like Moses and co. or Shadrach and co. we do not need to be in the hundreds or thousands to enjoy the power of unity in the Lord; for He says that the unity of even two persons in prayer is powerful: “whenever two of you agree on earth about anything you pray for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven” (Mt. 18:19).

Why is the prayer of just two persons powerful? It is because of the Lord in whose name the two pray: “where two or three are gathered in my name, I am in their midst” (Mt. 18:20). In other words, the two persons plus Christ are more powerful than the whole of humanity. Shadrach and co. had an angel in their midst; but we have someone greater: when we pray together in the name of Christ, we have the very King of angels in our midst!

The power of two persons plus Christ is demonstrated by St. Peter and St. John. As the two were going to the temple in Jerusalem, they met a beggar who was lame. When the latter asked for some alms, St. Peter (convinced that Christ was with them) told the beggar: “Silver and gold we have none; but I give you what I have: in the name of Jesus of Nazareth I order you to get up and walk” (Acts 3:6). Immediately the man was healed! That was an instance of the power of the prayer of two persons united in the Lord!

The Gospel according to St. Luke gives us another instance of the power of the prayer of two persons united in the Lord. Jesus sent His disciples in pairs. After their mission, they reported to the Lord how even demons succumbed to their ministry. Then Jesus, whose power was at work in the ministry of the disciples, and who could see more than them, told them that not only demons were defeated, but the very king of demons (satan) was conquered (*cf*. Lk. 10:1, 17-18).

Beloved, Christ will handle your challenges and problems, if you and your wife/husband are united in prayer. United with the all-powerful Christ, you don’t need to run to one pastor after another.

Beloved, you may be a single parent with a teenager child; why not join hands with him/her in prayer? If you do so, Christ (in whose name you pray) will take care of your challenges. You will be two plus the all-powerful Christ. Beloved, you or your brother/sister may be experiencing some difficulties. In that case, why don’t you join hands with him/her in prayer? If you do so, Christ will handle your difficulties.

Better still if we are three (like Moses and co. or Shadrach and co.) or more in prayer, the Lord will grant us victories in the battles of life. Therefore, the family should pray together; siblings should pray together; friends should pray together; church members should pray together; etc.

“United we stand; divided we fall.” Therefore, if you and your spouse or children or parents or siblings or friends have quarrelled, the Lord enjoins you to take the initiative to seek reconciliation. Let us not allow the evil one to take advantage of our division. Rather, we should be motivated by the power in our united prayer, and seek reconciliation. Finally, may Christ, who is greater than the angel who assisted Shadrach and co., cool off the heat of life as He stands amidst us in prayer. Amen!