



We have prayed, we have begged, we have invoked God's help. For a family member, for a friend, for the Church, for the parish priest, for the dying, for the motherland, for the enemies, for the poor, or for the whole world.

We have also asked for our own needs: to overcome a sin that weakens us, to cleanse our hearts of deep grudges, to get a job, or to discover what god's Will is in our lives.

We hear or read very beautiful cases of prayers received by God. A sick person who heals from the pleas of family and friends. A sinner who becomes before he dies thanks to the prayers of St Teresa of the Child Jesus and other good souls. A "political" victory in favor of life after overcoming difficulties that seemed granitic.

Other times, thousands, millions of people, feel that their requests were not heard. They fail to stop God from stopping a wicked law that will allow the abortion of thousands of children. They fail to overcome a severe crisis or to find so many people in need. They do not lead a conflicting marriage to overcome its continuing clashes. They do not reach the health of a much-loved son who dies in the tears of his parents, family and friends.

In the Old Testament we find several accounts of "unheard" prayers. One introduces us to the people of Israel before a battle with the Philistines. After a first military defeat, Israel did not know what to do. They decided to bring the Ark of the Covenant to the camp. The Philistines feared, but chose to work, and defeated the Jews. Even the Ark was captured (cf. 1Sam 4:1-11).

Another story is the one that introduces us to how King David pleads and fasts for the life of the child he has had after his adultery with Bathsheba. The son, after several days of illness, dies, as if God had not attended the prayers of the famous king of Israel (cf. 2Sam 12:15-23).

The New Testament offers numerous stories of prayers heard. Christ acts with the finger of God, and with His healings and miracles He witnesses the coming of the Messiah. Therefore, when asked by the envoys of John the Baptist who wished to

know whether or not it is the one who had to arrive, Jesus answers: "*Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are clean, the deaf hear, the dead are resurrected, the good news is announced to the poor; And blissful one who finds no scandal in me!*" (Lk 7,22-23).

We also read how prayer in the Garden of Olives, in which the Son asks the Father to free him from the chalice, would seem not to have been heard (cf. Lk 22:40-46). Jesus experiences, in His holy humanity, what it means to desire and to ask for something and not to "get it".

Then are there prayers that are not heard? Is it possible that Jesus has taught us that if we ask, we will get (cf. Lk 11:1-13), but then we see that things happen in a very different way?

In Santiago's letter we find a response: "*You ask and you do not receive because you ask wrong, with the intention of wasting it on your passions*" (Sant 4:3). This answer, however, serves for those requests that arise not from good desires, but from greed, from the slavery of passions. How can God hear the prayer of those who pray to win the lottery to live loosely and with all their satisfied whims?

There are many cases where we ask for good things. Why doesn't a mother and father who pray for the child to give up the drug notice any apparent change? Why do some children who pray one day and another also fail to get their parents reconciled, and have to cry bitterly because they are getting divorced one day? Why does a good, honest politician pray for peace for his homeland and see one day being conquered by the armies of an oppressive tyrant?

The "do not listen" situations in the face of good requests are a lot. The heart can, then, feel a deep sorrow, an intense discouragement, in the face of the apparent silence of a God who does not defend the innocent or give adequate punishment to the guilty.

There are times when we ask, like the Psalmist: "Has his love been exhausted forever? / Is the Word for all ages over? / Has God forgotten to be merciful, / has closed his bowels from anger?" (Salt 77.9-11).

However, the "silence of God" that allows the apparent advancement of evil in the world has already been overcome by the great response of Easter. If it is true that Christ passed through the cross while his Father was silent, it is also true that by His obedience Christ was heard and has overcome death, pain, evil, sin (cf. Heb 5:7-10).

It is difficult for us to enter into that mystery of "unheard" prayer. It is about trusting even heroism, when pain penetrates the deepest of the soul because we see how suffering hurts our lives or the lives of those beings we love the most.

On these occasions we need to remember that there are no lost tears for the heart of the Father who knows what is best for each of his children. The moment of the "silence of God" becomes, from the grace of Christ, the moment of the yes of the believer who trusts beyond the trial.

Then there is a miracle perhaps greater than that of a very desired healing: that of the soul who accepts the will of the Father.