

Jimmy said, "There are actually 34 of us, because God has never left us down here." Victor said, "'Under the earth there is a ray of light, my path, and faith is the last thing that is lost. . . I have been born again." Mario said, "I was with God and I was with the devil; they fought me but God won. He took me by my best hand, the hand of God, and I held on to him. I never thought for one minute that God wouldn't get me out of there. I believe. . . that God does test people and I believe that we have the possibility to confront things in life such as what we had to confront, . . . but I'm very happy that it happened to me because I believe it was the moment in which to make changes." Upon reaching the surface, the oldest miner, age 63, dropped to his knees in prayer.

Give credit to the rescue workers, the Chilean people and their government, and to the engineers who designed the drill and the capsule. But give credit to the faith of 33 miners trapped 7 weeks beneath 700,000 tons of rock, surviving their first 17 days on 200 calories a day and water they dug out of the earth or salvaged from equipment radiators. Today we join the rest of the world in thanking God for this miraculous rescue, and for the 33 families who have had their worst fears eliminated and their greatest hopes fulfilled.

Never underestimate the power of prayer. Prayer takes work, and we may lose interest in it when we don't need it. As with any skill, it can get rusty, and we can't always do it the way we would like. Many people wish they could pray better. They wish they could eliminate distractions, concentrate more, and truly enjoy their time with God. In the past they have experienced what prayer can do. But they have forgotten how to get there.

Today's first reading tells a story of the power of prayer. Amalek waged battle against Moses. Joshua fought below, while Moses stayed above and prayed. He prayed with his hands up in the air, but Moses grew physically tired. Prayer can be demanding. Moses rested every so often, but whenever he did, Amalek started winning the battle. So Moses sat down on a rock, and his friends Aaron and Hur stood on either side of him, holding up his hands to help him pray. With that, Joshua finished off Amalek. Prayer saved the day.

If your prayer is difficult, try different things. Try a different posture. Try some gesture. Try praying in a different place or time of day. Try using a different book. At times you cannot pray well. You may be too sick or too tired. So you rely on the help of other people. Like Aaron and Hur, they hold you up by praying when you cannot do it all alone. You do it for others. You lift your hands to God when they cannot.

As 33 miners have learned, prayer is an intense activity. When it's done right, it takes a lot out of you. That is one reason many people do not pray as much as they should. It's hard. They need help from others. When other people pray with you, it sustains your faith, and when you get what you ask for, it is time to say another prayer, a prayer of thanks to God.