

Is anyone here trying to housebreak a new puppy?

If you've ever tried to housebreak a new puppy, you know that the key to success is consistency and persistence. You must always take the puppy out the moment it wakes up. You must never let it whine and look like it needs to go, without getting it outside. And if you let the puppy get away with any indoor accidents, you can bet that it will return to the scene of the crime for a repeat version of its indiscretion no matter how well you clean the spot.

Now if you want to see true persistence, try going to the store with your child. It's an absolute, positive law of the universe that your child (regardless of age, even in their sixties) is going to suddenly, desperately need or want whatever is being sold by the check-out stand or in that particular aisle.

Whether it's the gum & candy aisle, the cookies and snack aisle, or the beverage aisle; whining, nagging, begging, pleading, holding their breath, and even out-right crying and screaming is sure to break out as the desired goody is passed.

Jesus gives a great example of perseverance in the story of a widow and a certain judge, “***who neither feared God nor respected any human being.***” This poor woman seemed unable to get a just ruling in her case. So, she kept badgering the corrupt and incompetent judge, demanding an honest judgment. This stalemate continued for quite some time, but finally, to get this annoying woman out of his hair, and perhaps out of fear of bodily harm, he enters a just decision. Now, if the woman had given up early in the fight, do you think the judge would ever have ruled in her favor? Not likely!

Jesus uses this parable to teach us about the importance of constant prayer. In fact, prayer was central in the life of Jesus. We see Jesus praying after His baptism when the heavens opened. After He healed the leper He withdrew from the crowds and prayed. He prayed all night long before He chose His apostles. He took Peter, James and John up on the mountain to pray while He was transfigured before them. And the list goes on.

Just as prayer was foremost in the life of Jesus, prayer ought to be central in our lives as well. We need to be patient, persistent and believing in our prayer. After all, if even an unjust judge surrenders to a lowly widow who keeps pleading her case, how much more will God, who is our loving Father, listen to the persistent prayers of His children?

Nor, should we get discouraged when God doesn't answer our prayers as quickly as we want or in the way we think He should. God sees the present and the future; He knows far better than we what's best for us.

We see that in Jesus' own prayer in the garden before His passion. He pleaded, "**My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will.**" He knew precisely what He was facing: a mock trial, a horrible scourging, being insulted and spat upon, crowned with thorns, and executed in the most humiliating, most painful, cruelest death imaginable. Of course, He wanted to avoid this. Yet, He surrendered to the His Father's Will. By denying the most passionate, most urgent prayer of His Son, this greatest of all evils then becomes the greatest of all good, the most awesome act of love imaginable, —the forgiveness of sins—the opened door to paradise.

Some 350 years after Jesus told this parable to His disciples, a woman in North Africa continuously flooded heaven with prayers for the conversion of her son. It seems this young man was wasting his life away drinking, carousing and spending a lot of time with loose women. While very brilliant he seemed content to squander his abilities and talents. Like the widow in the gospel, this mother, would not give up, even though she could see no immediate response. After nearly 20 years, Monica's prayers were answered. Indeed, they were answered in ways she could never have imagined. Her son not only changed his lifestyle, but at age 36 he was ordained a priest. At the age of 41, he was ordained a bishop and was bishop of Hippo in North Africa for 35 years. Today, St. Augustine is considered one of the Church's greatest saints and a doctor of the Church.

Of course, Jesus wants us to pray for favors, healings, blessings and even miracles. But I'm convinced that first and foremost, our prayer should be motivated by our genuine love of God. Love, praise and surrender to The Father who created us and gave us life; Love and thanksgiving to The Son who became one of us, so our sins could be forgiven and the gates of heaven opened to us; Love of The Holy Spirit, who strengthens us in our weakness and guides us. God is our most loving Father, our best Friend.