

# From the Chaplaincy



## ANSWERED PRAYERS

By Fr. Francis Ongkingco

When it comes to prayer, one of the most basic questions asked is: how do we know they are answered? Humanly speaking, answered prayers are when we *receive* the favor or request we have been petitioning God for.

But not all prayers are answered materially (i.e., regaining our health, finding a job, meeting one's soul-mate or discovering one's vocation). In fact, quite often they are answered in totally unexpected ways, manners and moments. And sometimes, they seem – though this isn't true – to have fallen on deaf ears.

Naturally, when speaking of answered prayers, we plainly mean getting what we had asked for. And with more faith, we accept that God may have reasons we don't know or understand for not granting us some of our requests. In any case, praying perseveringly for our needs is always something good and we gain much more than we can humanly and spiritually imagine.

Recently, however, I gained another insight about the notion of answered prayers. It all came about while conversing with someone who was consulting me on how to improve on his prayer life. As we spoke, an idea suddenly hit me, answered prayers have another angle: it may also be understood as answering God's prayers in us!



Precisely, I recalled St. Paul's beautiful and mysterious teaching about the Holy Spirit. In his chapter 8 of his letter to the Romans he says: "*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know how we ought to pray, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans too deep for words.* (Rm. 8:26)"

St. Paul is somehow saying that the Spirit prays on our behalf and also prays in us. Now, haven't we one way or the other experienced his petitions to us in our hearts? For example, when we feel the

urge to be more refined or attentive in our prayers, duties or neighbor. When some 'voice' tells us to forgo some comfort and offer it for someone – we may not know who – who may need our sacrifices and prayers.

Thus, when we promptly respond to His loving inspirations or movements in our hearts, we are actually *answering His prayers!* And in the same way when our prayers are answered, the Paraclete is filled with delight because we have learned to be more docile and humble to His promptings. Ultimately, He is pleased because "answering His prayers" will only end up for our good and growth.

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I believe this way of understanding *answered prayers* will fill us with a youthful hope when praying. We will no longer falter nor be discouraged when we ask God for things, because we are filled with more confidence that we too could please God when we answer His prayers in our hearts.

