

Daily Homily
First Week in Lent, Thursday
25 February 2021
[USCCB Daily Readings](#)

During the Lenten Season for our weekday Masses, the first reading and the Gospel usually relate to each other. This is not the case during Ordinary Time. Today the connection is easy – prayer!

If you don't know the whole story of Queen Esther, a woman whose praises are sung in the Old Testament, you should read the whole story. It's relatively short. Here it is in a nutshell... Esther is of Jewish descent. The king of Persia recruits her into his harem because of her physical beauty. The king and those in the king's court know nothing of Esther's background. Eventually, she captures the king's heart and is made his queen. In the course of the story, the king's other henchmen develop this personal vendetta against the Jewish people. They connive and concoct a plan to have them exterminated, of which the king complies. At this point, Esther's background in the Jewish faith is unknown to anyone in the kingdom, except of course her Jewish relatives and friends who are being persecuted. Esther is compelled to do something to save her people, but if she exposes her true background in the Jewish faith, she risks being put to death as well. So what a dilemma! So what does she do? She prays to God.

The prayer she offers is the first reading for today. There is all sorts of emotion in it – there is sadness and begging and pleading. Esther says it, "I am alone. I have no one but you, God." Then she makes her request, turn hearts ... change hearts ... convert hearts. Change the situation. What a powerful prayer! She says it as if it's her last gasp of air.

Look at any of the saints in the back windows. Their prayers led them into so many directions and to so many places and people. Look at the people who are in this place this morning. Our prayers have led us in so many directions and to so many places and people. There is power in prayer – not an earthly power, but a heavenly power – it is a power that we invoke, but it is a power that does not belong to us. It belongs to God alone. As humans we want and work in answers. But God is God. God does not work in answers all the time.

So this Lent keep knocking... or like Queen Esther, keep pounding on the door of prayer. Keep seeking the good of others. Keep asking God to release His heavenly power in the ways that only God knows best.