

PATTON AND THE POWER OF PRAYER... Recently I saw again on television the movie "Patton" starring George C. Scott. That movie, which won an Academy Award back in 1970, is a classic. It depicts in a very real and vivid way the life and career of general George C. Patton(1884-1945). The General, known as "Old Blood and Guts" was a tough military commander. There is one scene in that movie that caught my attention. During the invasion of France, Patton's army was plagued by bad weather-steadily falling rain that hampered the army's effort to advance. So General Patton called in the Chaplain who as it turned out, was a Roman Catholic Priest by the name of Msgr. James O'Neill. Patton said to the priest, "Chaplain, do you have a good prayer for weather? We have to do something about this terrible weather if we are going to win the war." The chaplain was instructed to have that prayer within the hour. The priest worked on that prayer diligently for the next hour. Patton approved it and it was distributed to the 250,000 men in the third army who were instructed to say it. Well, the Lord heard that prayer and looked with favor on General Patton and his army. The weather changed and became good. And supposedly the General said, "Give that chaplain a promotion-he stands in good with the Lord!" During this last week with all the very cold temperatures, I began to think about the General's prayer. I think we need another prayer for warmer weather! Seriously though, the power of prayer is something that we should all reflect upon during this Season of Lent. General Patton believed in it and so should we. What is prayer? Simply put, it is the raising of the mind and heart to the Lord. The Great Saint Teresa of Avila defined it this way; "Prayer is nothing but a conversation between ourselves and the God who loves us so much." Prayer can take many different forms. There is vocal prayer, meditation and contemplative prayer. Vocal prayer can be described as "Saying Prayers." Of course vocal prayers are familiar to us-The Hail Mary, The Our Father, The Act of Contrition, and so on. Saying prayers is good as long as we sincerely mean the words that we say and pray attentively. Meditation is a higher form of prayer; it is sort of a pious reflection on the scriptures or one of the truths of faith. One of the highest levels of prayer is called "Contemplation." There is not much reasoning involved in this. The person just simply gazes upon the Lord and enjoys His sacred presence. Whatever form of prayer that we take in our lives, there is one thing for certain-it is important that we do it each and every day. Just the way we need to nourish ourselves physically daily by eating regular meals, so too do we need to nourish our souls spiritually with prayer. Although many of us have never served in the Armed Forces, all of us as Catholic Christians can be considered as soldiers or warriors for Christ. Perhaps that concept is not too popular these days but its true. Saint Paul wrote to the Ephesians: "Put on the armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil...with all prayer and supplication, pray at every opportunity in the Spirit." Let us heed that advice and become people of prayer because there are more things wrought by prayer than we could ever dream or imagine!

Sincerely in Christ,

Father Jerome