

Scripture Study

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle C



Opening prayer

Genesis 18:20-32

(Ps 138:1-3,6-8)

Colossians 2:12-14

Luke 11:1-13

Overview of the Gospel:

- In this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus' disciples, on their way with him to Jerusalem, and after observing him in prayer, ask him to teach *them* how to pray.
- It was common among each religious community of disciples at the time (such as among the followers of John the Baptist) to have their own distinctive manner of prayer.
- Jesus responds by giving them what has come to be known as the Lord's Prayer, or, the Our Father. On another occasion, Jesus will give his followers a longer version of this prayer with 7 petitions rather than the 4 found here (see Mt 6:9-15)
- Jesus uses this opportunity to do three things: **1)** He gives to his disciples a communal and model prayer (verses 1-4); **2)** He teaches them the importance of persistence in prayer (verses 5-8. See also Luke 18:1-7); and **3)** He assures them about the effectiveness of prayer (verses 9-13). He also reveals that God, like any good father, always wants to give what is best for his beloved children, especially the best gift of all (verse 13).

Questions:

- In the First Reading, how can Abraham be seen as a model of one who offers prayer? What type of prayer? With what attitude? For whom does he pray?
- In the Second Reading, St. Paul tells us that God gives us the gift of eternal life even though, strictly speaking, we do not deserve it (verse 13). How should that knowledge form our motivation to reach out to and pray for others?
- In the Our Father (verses 2-4), what two concerns related to God come first? Why? What personal concerns then follow? How do prayer and forgiveness relate?
- What does the parable in verses 5-8 teach about prayer? How do verses 9-10 relate to the parable? What attitude is implied in verses 9-10?
- If God already knows what we need, why is perseverance in prayer called for?
- What concerns occupy most of your time in prayer: Praise? Thanksgiving? Confession? Petition? Why? In what area do you wish to grow?
- How often do you ask Jesus to teach you to pray? What do you learn about prayer from the pattern of the Our Father?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 2601, 2759, 2761, 2765-66, 1425, 2613, 443

Closing Prayer

Persevere in prayer. Persevere even when your efforts seem barren. Prayer is always fruitful.

–St. Josemaria Escriva

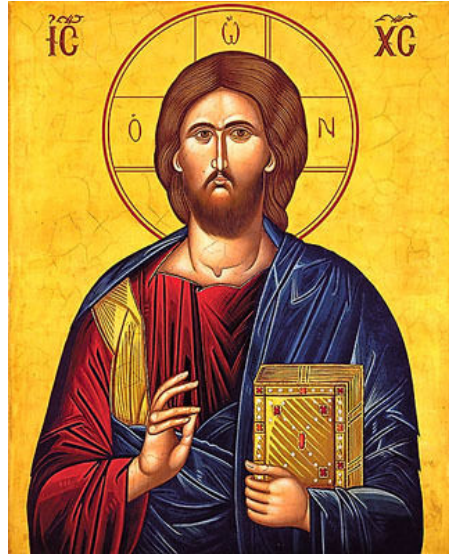
"Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you"

Scripture: Luke 11:1-13

He was praying in a certain place, and when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." And he said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread; and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive every one who is indebted to us; and lead us not into temptation."

And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything'? I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him whatever he needs. And I tell you, Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Meditation: Do you pray with joy and confidence? The Jews were noted for their devotion to prayer. Formal prayer was prescribed for three set times a day. And the rabbis had a prayer for every occasion. It was also a custom for rabbis to teach their disciples a simple prayer they might use on a regular basis. Jesus' disciples ask him for such a prayer. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray he gave them the disciple's prayer, what we call the *Our Father* or *Lord's Prayer*. What does Jesus' prayer tell us about



God and about ourselves? First, it tells us that God is both Father in being the Creator and Author of all that he has made, the first origin of everything and transcendent authority, and he is eternally Father by his relationship to his only Son who, reciprocally is Son only in relation to his Father (Matthew 11:27). All fatherhood and motherhood is derived from him (Ephesians 3:14-15). In Christ we are reborn and become the adopted children of God (John 1:12-13; 3:3).

Jesus teaches us to address God as "our Father" and to confidently ask him for the things we need to live as his sons and daughters. We can approach God our Father with confidence and boldness because Jesus Christ has opened the way to heaven for us through his death and resurrection. When we ask God for help, he fortunately does not give us what we deserve. Instead, he responds with grace and mercy. He is kind and forgiving towards us and he expects us to treat our neighbor the same. We can pray with expectant faith because our heavenly Father loves us and treats us as his children. He delights to give us what is good. His love and grace transforms us and makes us like himself. Through his grace and power we can love and serve one another as Jesus taught -- with grace, mercy, and loving-kindness. Do you treat others as they deserve, or do you treat them

as the Lord would with grace and mercy? Jesus' prayer includes an injunction that we must ask God to forgive us in proportion as we forgive those who have wronged us. Are you ready to forgive as Jesus forgives?

What can we expect from God, especially when we recognize that he doesn't owe us anything and that we don't deserve his grace and favor? Jesus used the illustration of late-night guest to teach his listeners an important lesson about how God treats us in contrast to the kind of treatment we might expect from good neighbors. The rule of hospitality in biblical times required the cooperation of the entire community in entertaining an unexpected or late-night guest. Whether the guest was hungry or not, a meal would be served. In a small village it would be easy to know who had baked bread. Bread was essential for a meal because it served as a utensil for dipping and eating from the common dishes. Asking for bread from one's neighbor was both a common occurrence and an expected favor. To refuse to give bread would bring shame because it was a sign of inhospitality. If a neighbor can be imposed upon and coerced into giving bread in the middle of the night, how much more hospitable is God, who, no matter what the circumstances, is generous and gracious to give us what we need. In conclusion Jesus makes a startling claim: *How much more will the heavenly Father give!* The Lord is ever ready to give us not only what we need, but more than we can expect. He gives freely of his Holy Spirit that we may share in his life and joy. Do you approach your heavenly Father with confidence in his mercy and kindness?

"Heaven Father, you are merciful, gracious and kind. May I never doubt your love nor hesitate to seek you with confidence in order to obtain the gifts, graces, and daily provision I need to live as your disciple and child."

Meditation: © 2010 Don Schwager
www.rc.net/wcc/readings/

