

17th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

GOSPEL

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Once Jesus was in a certain place praying, and when he had finished one of his disciples said, 'Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.'

He said to them, 'Say this when you pray:

"Father, may your name be held holy,
your kingdom come;
give us each day our daily bread,
and forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive each one who is in debt to us.
And do not put us to the test."

He also said to them:

'Suppose one of you has a friend and goes to him in the middle of the night to say, "My friend, lend me three loaves, because a friend of mine on his travels has just arrived at my house and I have nothing to offer him"; and the man answers from inside the house, "Do not bother me. The door is bolted now, and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up to give it you." I tell you, if the man does not get up and give it him for friendship's sake, persistence will be enough to make him get up and give his friend all he wants.

'So I say to you: Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For the one who asks always receives; the one who searches always finds; the one who knocks will always have the door opened to him. What father among you would hand his son a stone when he asked for bread? Or hand him a snake instead of a fish? Or hand him a scorpion if he asked for an egg? If you then, who are evil, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!

(Luke 11:1-13)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- In Jesus' time, there were many teachers offering a spiritual path to their followers—a particular 'way'. Here the disciples ask Jesus to teach them his 'way' to the Father.
- The reluctance of the man in the parable to get up to help his friend may be explained if we understand the houses of the period. Animals often occupied the ground floor at night while the family spread out their sleeping mats on an overhead platform. The door was often difficult to bolt. To get up to assist, this man would have disturbed the entire family and flock.

EXPLORING THE WORD

The God of this gospel text is not a vague and distant God but one who is in an intimate relationship of love—that of a father. If ordinary parents know what is good for their children and want to give them all that is good, how much more will our Father in heaven give us what we need. Asking our Father for the things that we need (rather than the things we want) is an expression of our dependence on God. To ask is to place ourselves in a state of cooperation with God. We also have to commit ourselves to working towards that which we pray for or else prayer becomes a way of evading responsibility and we make God into some kind of Santa Claus.

- So often we abuse this privilege of asking God for the things we need. In what ways can this happen? In what ways can we turn prayer and petition into something inappropriate?
- Persistence is praised in this text. Have there been times when you have felt like giving up on your journey? What has kept you persevering?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- Seek and you will find; ask and it will be given to you. What is it that you are searching for? Have the answers been found yet?
- What would you ask God for at this point in your journey?
- Have you ever had to refuse a request for help that was made of you? Why? What were the circumstances? How did you feel? Did it alter your relationship with the petitioner? Do you regret that decision? Share your stories.
- Live out the Our Father: honour God, give thanks for your daily bread and forgive others who wrong you.
- Learn the Lord's Prayer by heart if you do not already know it. Pray it often and carefully this week. Be attentive to each petition as you pray.

SHARING THE TRADITION

A closer look at the Scripture of the day, to see how it makes more explicit God's word to us through the teachings of Jesus Christ

The Lord's Prayer is one of the oldest and most cherished of the Church. Reflect on the meaning of each phrase:

Our Father

- In what ways do you experience God as loving Father?

Hallowed be your name

- How do you give homage to God's name?

Your kingdom come, your will be done

- Explore the meaning of the kingdom or reign of God. How can we know God's will? What is our responsibility in helping build the kingdom?

Give us this day our daily bread

- What are we in need of daily?

Forgive us ... as we forgive

- How easy or difficult do you find this?

Lead us not into temptation

- What are the temptations in your life?

A fuller commentary on the Lord's Prayer can be found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (§§2759-2853).

SYMBOLS AND IMAGES

In the Old Testament, God is often referred to as the Father of his covenant people, Israel, and as the one who will act to deliver his people. When Jesus addresses God as Father, however, he gives expression to his unique, personal, filial relationship to God. Through Jesus, the disciples are able to know God as a gracious and loving Father.

LIVING THE WORD

Practical ideas for group leaders to employ in connecting Scripture and daily life, with suggestions for music and environment

- Try to live all aspects of the Lord's Prayer this week. Ask God for what you need (and not for what you want!)
• Use an image of Jesus at prayer as a focus. Invite catechumens to use the style of a prayer of intercession. You could respond to each using the Taize refrain 'O Lord, hear my prayer' (GA 431). Conclude with the blessing at RCIA §97C.

NOTES

Series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes.