

LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPEL



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**SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY
in ORDINARY TIME**

24th July 2022

Luke 11:1 Jesus was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” ² He said to them, “When you pray, say:

Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

³ Give us each day our daily bread.

⁴ And forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.
And do not bring us to the time of trial.”

Luke 11:5 And he said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; ⁶ for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.’ ⁷ And he answers from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.’ ⁸ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

Luke 11:9 “So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹ Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? ¹² Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? ¹³ 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!”

In Luke Jesus teaches this prayer because the disciples have asked for his help. The form of the prayer is the short one, as opposed to the longer version which was adopted by the church for use in the liturgy.

In its short form we see even more clearly how this simple prayer has all that we need.

We praise God as Father,
we acknowledge that we want what he wants
and that we trust him to look after us.

We also recognise our need for forgiveness and our willingness to forgive.

Finally we ask that in the life of faith we will not have to endure anything that would cause us to lose that faith.

In what follows Jesus uses the images of the unwilling friend and the caring parent to make us think about the relationship with God that should lie behind our prayer. God is the loving Father and in giving us the Holy Spirit he is holding back nothing.

SEAN GOAN—Let the Reader Understand, Year C

It may be worth recalling that this way of praying is not so much a formula of prayer (like the Hail Mary) as precisely a way of praying, a sequence or series of steps to follow, when praying.

This is a teaching on prayer, with a parable to illustrate intercession. The extensive teaching on prayer in Luke-Acts may be summarised as follows:

Prayer is hugely significant for Luke.
Jesus himself prays frequently
Many others pray
Three parables are devoted to prayer.
There is an extended teaching on prayer in Luke
Prayer etc. remains vital in the Acts
Heart of prayer: the Holy Spirit.

KIERAN O'MAHONY—tarsus.ie

When it comes to prayer, it is often a question of finding what works for you. In recent times, many people have found prayer apps - such as 'Pray as you Go' - extremely helpful, because they allow for guided prayer at different moments of the day, even if you are on a bus, or walking to work. They encourage us to make our whole day into a prayer, and they can help us to connect with prayer even when we don't feel like praying or can't pray. We've all been there, so we can sympathise with the disciples' question to Jesus in today's gospel, 'Lord, teach us to pray'. It may surprise us to hear that Jesus gives them a very direct response - actual words in a formula to be recited.

Prayer brings us back to solid ground .. bends our attention away from ourselves and towards God, and then to those who have been entrusted to our love and practical care: family, friends, community and especially those who lack the blessings we have been given so abundantly." (Columba Stewart OSB)

TRÍONA DOHERTY & JANE MELLETT - Go Deeper

St Augustine on Prayer
(Letter 130, to Proba,)

From a long letter to a correspondent seeking advice on prayer St. Augustine writes.

Why pray?

"The Lord God requires us to ask not that thereby our wishes may be made known to Him,
for they cannot be unknown to Him, but in order that by prayer there may be aroused in us that desire by which we may receive what God prepares to bestow.
His gifts are very great, but are small and straitened in our capacity to receive.

Therefore it is said to us "Make your heart bigger" (2Cor 6.11).

The Lord's Prayer a model of all prayer

And if you go over all the words of holy prayers, you will, I believe, find nothing which cannot be comprised and summed up in the petitions of the Lord's Prayer.

Wherefore, in praying, we are free to use different words to any extent, but we must ask the same things; in this we have no choice.

REFLECTION

If there is something we must learn again from Jesus in these times of crisis and confusion in his church, it is **trust** - not as an attitude of the naive who comfort themselves hoping for better times, still less as a passive and irresponsible reaction, but as the most evangelical and prophetic behaviour in following Jesus the Christ today.

His three recommendations point to the same basic attitude of trust in God with different shades of meaning.

To ask is the proper attitude for the poor who need to receive from another something they cannot obtain by their own effort

To seek is not only to ask. It also requires that we get moving, taking steps to obtain something that is hidden from us because it is covered up or concealed.... The tragedy today is that we do not mobilise our forces to seek together new ways to sow the seed of the gospel in modern culture.

To knock or call out to is to cry out to someone who we feel is not near us, but who, we believe, can hear us and respond.

JOSÉ A PAGOLA—Following in the Footsteps of Jesus, Year C

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Lord, forgive us that we have made prayer into a bargain, where in exchange for our asking we receive your favours. Bring us to that prayer which is merely knocking at a door that is already open, searching in the dark for something that is already found.

Lord, we sometimes think we have to leave our experience to get close to you.

But Jesus taught us to start with what we have known.

So today, we thank you for those who love us, friends, parents, spiritual guides, teachers, the kind of people we know if ever we asked them for bread, no way would they give us a stone, or if we asked them for fish, no way would they hand us a snake, and if we asked them for an egg, no way would they hand us a scorpion.

Lord, these people are good but their goodness cannot compare with yours.

MICHEL DE VERTEUIL—Lectio Divina on the Sunday Gospels, Year C

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. In the prayer Jesus gave us as a model, the focus is not on getting God to do what we want, but on trying to be open to what God wants: "Your kingdom come". That openness implies a trust that what God wants for us is our good. When have you found that it was good for you to take life as it comes, trusting that the Spirit was with you no matter what happened?
2. It can be helpful at times to pray the Lord's Prayer with one eye on what you see lies ahead for you in the day. Spend a moment thinking of what you have to do and then take each phrase of the Lord's Prayer and see how that speaks to your agenda.

JOHN BYRNE— Intercom