

17th Sunday of Ordinary Time (Cycle C)
(Genesis 18:20-32; Colossians 2:6-14; Luke 11:1-13)

In his book, “The Jesuit Guide to Almost Everything”, Fr. James Martin tells a story about his friend and fellow Jesuit, Fr. David Donovan, a noted spiritual director. One day, Fr. David was visiting his elderly mother. When he saw her praying the rosary, he thought to himself that the rosary was old fashion, and he would teach her a better way to pray.

“What happens when you pray the rosary? He asked his mother.

“Well,” she said, “ I quiet myself down, and then I look at God and God looks at me.”

Fr. David was stunned by her answer and he learned that day never to prejudge prayer and a person’s spiritual relationship with God.

You see, there are many ways to pray.

St. Therese of Lisieux wrote: “For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.”

St. John Damascene wrote: “Prayer is the raising of one’s mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God.”

Prayer is communication, communion and covenant with God, or to put it more simply, Prayer is talking to God. It is said that the purpose of prayer is not to change God but to change us. Prayer gives us the courage and hope and faith to face whatever happens.

Prayer can be a life changing experience.

People can pray from the heart, pray by saying prayers composed by others such as praying a rosary or a novena, or praying out loud, praying silently, praying using Scripture, or simply sitting quietly and listening to the still small voice as Elijah, the Prophet, did.

Prayer draws us closer to God. It is just like when we talk to our friends and loved ones. We shouldn’t be afraid to pray, and we shouldn’t be afraid to express our emotions in prayer.

Mother Teresa wrote in her book, “Total Surrender”:

“God...is the God of love, compassion, and mercy. That is why we can trust him fully...God will never, never, never let us down if we have faith and put our trust in him”.

In our Gospel reading today, Jesus gives his disciples a way to pray which we now call the “Lord’s Prayer”.

Today we heard one of the two versions of the Lord’s Prayer (the other one appears in Matthew’s Gospel). It is a prayer so complete that St. Thomas Aquinas called the Lord’s Prayer “the summary of the whole gospel.”

So, what does the Lord’ Prayer tell us about Praying and about God?

First, that God is our Father. Now, I know that these days it is considered by some wrong to call God “Father” because of hurtful Fathers that some people may have had, but God is different. God is the perfect Father. Jesus called God his Father...a Father who loves His children unconditionally

Next, the Lord’s Prayer tells us that we should enter into prayer by praising God. As Jesus says “Hallowed be your name”.

The Lord's Prayer shows us that in invoking "Your Kingdom Come" we express our hope for Christ's return and for an end to all suffering and injustice.

In the Lord's Prayer, by asking God to "give us this day our daily bread", we ask for all of us to have the nourishment and grace that we need to live out this day...not just for one person, but for all.

In the Lord's Prayer, we ask God to "forgive us our sins for we ourselves forgive everyone..." We are telling God that we want His forgiveness and we pass His forgiveness on to others...and not just a few...but EVERYONE!

Finally, in the Lord's Prayer, we ask "do not subject us to the final test" This is a request for the Holy Spirit's gift of discernment so that we can rightly choose right from wrong, and that we may be protected from evil.

We know from our daily lives and from watching or reading the News that evil exists in this world. We know that bad things happen to good people. We know that sometimes it can appear that our prayers are not answered.

But Jesus tells us in our Gospel Reading “Ask and you shall Receive...Knock and the Door shall be opened”.

What Jesus and the saints tell us is to have faith. God is there for us. God loves us and wants what is best for us. God wants us to have a close relationship with him and prayer is the way for that to happen.

So, like Fr. Donovan’s mother, quiet yourselves down, look at God and God will look at you.