

GOSPEL

LUKE 11:1-13

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 to you." I tell you, if the man does not get up and give it to 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!

The Gospel of the Lord.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Spend some time reflecting and sharing on each line of Luke's version of the Our Father. In what ways does each line affirm and challenge how you live, act and respond to God?
2. The last two paragraphs of this passage focus on trusting God to answer prayer. What has your experience been of God answering prayers? In what ways have you found Jesus' promise in the last line of the passage to be true?

A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

The Gospel this Sunday opens with the scene of Jesus who is praying alone, apart from the others; when he finishes, the disciples ask him: "Lord, teach us to pray"; and He says in reply, "When you pray, say: 'Father...'. This word is the "secret" of Jesus' prayer, it is the key that he himself gives to us so that we too might enter into that relationship of confidential dialogue with the Father who accompanied and sustained his whole life.

With the name "Father" Jesus combines two requests: "hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come". Jesus' prayer, and the Christian prayer therefore, first and foremost, makes room for God, allowing him to show his holiness in us and to advance his kingdom, beginning with the possibility of exercising his Lordship of love in our lives.

Three other supplications complete this prayer that Jesus taught, the "Our Father".

There are three questions that express our basic needs: bread, forgiveness and help in temptation. One cannot live without bread, one cannot live without forgiveness and one cannot live without God's help in times of temptation.

The bread that Jesus teaches us to ask for is what is necessary, not superfluous. It is the bread of pilgrims, the righteous, a bread that is neither accumulated nor wasted, and that does not weigh us down as we walk.

Forgiveness is, above all, what we ourselves receive from God: only the awareness that we are sinners forgiven by God's infinite mercy can enable us to carry out concrete gestures of fraternal reconciliation. If a person does not feel that he/she is a sinner who has been forgiven, that person will never be able to make a gesture of forgiveness or reconciliation. It begins in the heart where you feel that you are a forgiven sinner.

The last supplication, "lead us not into temptation", expresses the awareness of our condition, which is always exposed to the snares of evil and corruption. We all know what temptation is!

Jesus' teaching on prayer continues with two parables, which he modelled on the behaviour of a friend towards another friend, and that of a father towards his son. Both are intended to teach us to have full confidence in God, who is Father. He knows our needs better than we do ourselves, but he wants us to present them to him boldly and persistently, because this is our way of participating in his work of salvation.

Prayer is the first and principle "working instrument" we have in our hands! In being persistent with God, we don't need to convince him, but to strengthen our faith and our patience, meaning our ability to strive together with God for the things that are truly important and necessary. In prayer there are two of us: God and I, striving together for the important things.

Among these, there is one, the great important thing that Jesus speaks of in today's Gospel, which we almost never ask for, and that is the Holy Spirit. "Give me the Holy Spirit...!" And Jesus says, "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 for it!". The Holy Spirit! We must ask that the Holy Spirit comes within us.

But what is the use of the Holy Spirit? We need him to live well, to live with

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wisdom and love, doing God's will.
What a beautiful prayer it would be if,
this week, each of us were to ask the
Father: "Father, give me the Holy Spirit!".

Our Lady demonstrates this with her
life, which was entirely enlivened by the
Spirit of God. May She, united to Jesus,
help us to pray to the Father so that we
might not live in a worldly manner, but
according to the Gospel, guided by the
Holy Spirit.

REFLECTION QUESTION

- What has struck you from this reflection by the Holy Father?

PRAYER

*Spend some time in prayer
with one another*

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the 'Glory Be' or similar prayer.