

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 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!'

A REFLECTION BY POPE BENEDICT XVI
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This Sunday's Gospel presents Jesus to us absorbed in prayer, a little apart from his disciples. When he had finished, one of them said to him: "Lord, teach us to pray" (Lk 11: 1). Jesus had no objection, he did not speak of strange or esoteric formulas but very simply said: "When you pray, say: 'Father' ", and he taught the Our Father (cf. Lk 11: 2-4), taking it from his own

prayer in which he himself spoke to God, his Father. St Luke passes the Our Father on to us in a shorter form than that found in the Gospel according to St Matthew, which has entered into common usage. We have before us the first words of Sacred Scripture that we learn in childhood. They are impressed in our memory, mould our life and accompany us to our last breath. They reveal that "we are not ready-made children of God from the start, but that we are meant to become so increasingly by growing more and more deeply in communion with Jesus. Our sonship turns out to be identical with following Christ" (Benedict XVI, Jesus of Nazareth [English translation], Doubleday, 2007, p. 138).

This prayer also accepts and expresses human material and spiritual needs: "Give us each day our daily bread; and forgive us our sins" (Lk 11: 3-4). It is precisely because of the needs and difficulties of every day that Jesus exhorts us forcefully: "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" (Lk 11: 9-10). It is not so much asking in order to satisfy our own desires as, rather, to keep a lively friendship with God who, the Gospel continues, "will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Lk 11: 13). The ancient "Desert Fathers" experienced this, as did contemplatives of all epochs who became, through prayer, friends of God, like Abraham who begged the Lord to spare the few righteous from the destruction of the city of Sodom (cf. Gen 18: 21-32). St Teresa of Avila addressed an invitation to her sisters with the words: we must "beseech God to deliver us from these perils for ever and to keep us from all evil! And although our desire for this may not be perfect, let us strive to make the petition. What does it cost us to ask it, since we ask it of One who is so powerful?" (Cammino, 60 (34), 4, in Opere complete, Milan 1998, p. 846) [title in English: The Way of Perfection]. Every time we say the Our Father our voices mingle with the voice of the Church, for those who pray are never alone. "From the rich variety of Christian prayer as proposed by

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the Church, each member of the faithful should seek and find his own way, his own form of prayer... each person will, therefore, let himself be led... by the Holy Spirit, who guides him, through Christ, to the Father" (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on some aspects of Christian meditation, 15 October 1989, n. 29; ore, 2 Jan. 1990, p. 10).

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: What does "From the rich variety of Christian prayer as proposed by the Church, each member of the faithful should seek and find his own way, his own form of prayer" mean to you?



Heart: How do you feel about this title, "friend of God"? Do you feel it describes you?



Hands: What would it look like to be "led by the Holy Spirit" in prayer? Consider taking more time this Faith Circle for prayer.

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. Offer 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 praying the 'Glory Be'.