

Homily for the 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2022 Year C

Today's Gospel is very much about prayer and praying.

It has been said that he who prays rises from his knees a better person; and I suppose that is true, because as we come to know God more through our loving conversations with Him, so we come to know ourselves better as well.

Prayer is talking to God; it is an intimate and loving conversation with our Father in Heaven.

It is walking in His company, paying loving attention to His presence and deepening our relationship with Him.

For this to happen, two things must come about. Firstly, some of our prayers have to be personalised, be in our own words, and secondly we have to come to value silence.

Sadly, some people cannot get beyond the memorised ritual prayers they have memorised when they speak to God in prayer, for example, the “Our Father”, the “Hail Mary”, et cetera.

There is nothing wrong with these prayers at all, they are a hymn of praise and worship.

But some stage in our prayer God expects us to be personally involved when we raise up our minds and hearts to Him.

God wants us in our conversations with Him to be real, so we can drop our inhibitions, come as we are and speak to Him in all honesty, in our human way.

We all, of course, have our own style of communication. Lengthy speaking and many words are not necessary with God. When heart speaks to heart, what matters is that it is real.

Christ's example of prayer, the “Our Father”, has traditional, and familiar words which have made it the community prayer for all times and for all occasions. But if you look at it in detail, it teaches us about methods and types of prayer itself.

This is what I mean.

“Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name”, this is adoration and praise. Always make room in your prayer to adore and praise God, the first duty of a creature to their Creator.

“Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.”

Resignation to the will of God, whatever that may be, is to be prepared to accept that our prayers never fall upon deaf ears. God does not ignore our prayers. He may not always give us what we want, but He will always give us what we need.

Ask and you will receive is a guarantee of a reply.

“Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us”.

Prayers sometimes need to be asking for forgiveness for we always stand in need of God's forgiveness. Our sorrow and our repentance do not just have to be put into words; they need to be expressed in deeds as well. Forgive others or God cannot forgive you. We must learn, above all, to forgive ourselves and not carry around the burden of continual guilt so that we do not hurt others. When God Forgives us, God forgets, so also we should let go of the painful memories of our sins.

“And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.”

Who has not ever felt the need to ask for God's protection in prayer? We need protection not just from physical danger or harm, but also from moral danger as well. The death of the soul is more serious than the death of the body.

The clue lies in the first two words of the prayer “Our Father”. Those words are so personal and intimate when we believe them and use them that it's almost like bending God's ear at heart when we use them in prayer.

What father could ignore his child when they call upon him. We Call upon our Father in adoration, praise, petition and need, sorrow and repentance. We resign ourselves to his love and trust to his will. And that is what the “Our Father” teaches us about prayer itself.

And finally, silence.

The rush and the noise of life can drown out the voice of God to us in our lives. We must find a time and place of silence to pray. Silence is not empty, it is not the absence of God, silence bears God to us. It is only in silence that we can speak to God and God can speak to us.