

## 17<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time C/2010

As Christians, prayer plays a big role in our daily life. But what is prayer? Why should we pray and how should we pray? The readings of this Sunday try to answer these questions by bringing us to the true spirit of prayer and by showing us how we have to address God in our prayers.

The first reading describes the tremendous intervention Abraham has done as he interceded before God for the preservation of Sodom and Gomorrah. At that time, the sins of the twin cities were growing more and more. In his judgment, God decided to destroy them and let his wrath consume everything that existed.

It was at that time that Abraham pleaded with God in favor of the sinful cities. Touched in his compassion and mercy by such an appeal, God renounced his anger and restrained from punishment.

What this text teaches us is that God is sensitive to human plea and prayer. He is touched by the human cry as well as he is offended by human sin. In spite of all that, however, he remains compassionate and merciful. That is why he always forgives us our sins and gives us a second chance so that we live.

When God forgives us, what he wants is that we change and become new people. What he wants is that we repent of our sinful situation and be saved. If we miss the opportunity he gives us, we can blame only ourselves.

God's mercy and forgiveness have been shown to us abundantly in the death and resurrection of Jesus. By dying on the cross for us, Jesus has taken away all our transgressions and brought us to life along with him. In that perspective, when we let ourselves be baptized in the name of Jesus, we accept to be buried with him and to be raised with him through faith by the power of God. The consequence of all this is that not only do we become the members of his body, but even his Father becomes our Father.

Then, we can address our prayer to a Father who knows us and loves us as his own children. All that brings us to the importance of the prayer of the "Our Father" we have in today's Gospel.

First of all, the fact that Jesus prays is already an invitation to each one of us to pray, any time and in any circumstance of life. When we pray, we are in union with Jesus and his Father. We pray to God in thanksgiving for the gift of life and his benefits toward us. We pray to him in our needs, and our expectations, in our joys and our trials. That is the content of the prayer of the "Our Father".

The prayer of the Our Father contains three parts and covers the whole range of our life by referring to our past, our present and our future. The first part deals with the glory of God and the second with human needs. It is only when God receives the honor that is due to him in our life that our human necessities can be addressed in the right order. For that reason, our prayer must never be an attempt to bend the will of God to our desires, but rather a submission of our wills to the will of God. That is why our prayer must seek first the fulfillment of God's plan and the glory of his name.

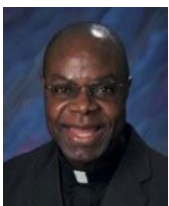
The petition for bread deals with our life in the present; the petition for forgiveness deals with our past; and the petition for the help in temptation deals with our future. The request for bread recognizes the providence of God upon us as the one who sustains us in the present life and provides for our needs. The request for forgiveness brings all the happenings of our past life in the presence of God so that we might be forgiven and purified by turning the page of the past for a new life with Christ. The request for help in temptation is about our faithfulness in our commitments; it puts the unknown of our future into God's hands. It reminds us that we need God in order to be strong and able to triumph over the temptations of evil. In all these petitions, Jesus teaches us to lay the whole of our life, past, present and the future, before the grace of God.

Let me highlight some points of meditation for today. First. The attitude of Abraham teaches us that each of us is a mediator of his brothers and sisters before God. We often forget in daily life this role of mediator. We have to take seriously when somebody asks for our prayers. We should never forget that the pray of the just person conveys God's grace and pleases God. Our faithfulness to God can save the lives of many.

Second. The fact that God renounced to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah is a sign that his mercy goes beyond our sins. However, the more he forgives us, the more he challenges us to repent. He is patient with us in order to give us the time to change.

Third. It was because of his persistence that Abraham obtained a positive answer to his petition. This episode teaches that God always answers our prayer. The problem, however, is how to come to recognize the answer he gives to our request. The assurance that God answers our prayer is in his faithfulness toward us and his veracity. If a friend can wake up in the middle of the night to help a bothering friend, why should not God do the same? If a father or a mother cannot give to his child a snake instead of fish, or a scorpion instead of omelet, why should not God give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?

It does not mean, however, that we should do nothing, because God knows our needs. On the contrary, we have to ask, to search and to knock at the door. Our perseverance is of great significance. We do our part and let God do his. Life improves not for the desperate and the resigned, but for those who use prayer and action together. May the Lord lead each one of us to understand that life should be addressed with faith, hope, and perseverance to meet its challenges! God bless you all.



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**Genesis 18, 20-32; Colossians 2, 12-14; Luke 11, 1-13**