**Homily for the 17th Sunday of Ordinary Time [C] (July 27, 2025)**

**Readings:- Gn 18:20-32, Col  2:12-14, Lk 11:1-13**

**My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ;**

The main themes of today’s Scripture readings are the power of intercessory prayer, the Our Father as the ideal prayer*,* and the necessity for persistence and perseverance in prayer, with trusting faith and boldness. In short, the readings teach us what to pray for and how to pray.

**“Why don’t you just try putting on the emergency brake?”** Father Barry Foster, a priest in Dublin, Ireland, parked his car on a rather steep slope close to his church. His little dog was lying on the rear seat and could not be seen by anyone outside the vehicle. Father Foster got out of the car and turned to lock the door with his usual parting command to the dog. *“Stay!”* he ordered loudly, to an apparently empty car. *“Stay!”* An elderly man was watching the performance with amused interest. Grinning, he suggested, *“Why don’t you just try putting on the emergency brake?”* (Colin Jeffery, *Catholic Digest*, May 1992, p. 72). — The theme of today’s Gospel is prayer, and it offers a model prayer. To the unbeliever, prayer is an exercise in futility like ordering *“Stay,”* to an automobile, fully expecting it to obey. But to the believer, prayer is the most powerful and the most reliable force in the world today by which we communicate with God.

**Important lessons from the readings of the day**: The first reading, taken from the book of Genesis, gives us a model for intercessory prayer provided by Abraham in his dialogue with God. Although Abraham seems to be trying to manipulate God through his skilful bargaining and humble, persistent intercession, God is actually being moved to mercy by the goodness of a few innocent souls. The Responsorial Psalm (Ps 138), with the Psalm Response, *“Lord, on the day I called for help, you answered me,”* is a hymn of hope and trust in the Lord, reminding us that God is close to the humble of heart and to all those who call upon Him in their need. The second reading, taken from Paul’s Letter to the Colossians, though it does not address prayer, reminds us of the need for perseverance in our living Faith in Christ*,*which provides the basis for all Christian prayers, especially for liturgical prayer: the mystery of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul assures us that, even when we were dead in sin, God gave us new life through Jesus and pardoned all our sins**.**In the Gospel passage, after teaching a model prayer, Jesus instructs his disciples to pray to God their Heavenly Father with the same boldness, daring, intimacy, conviction, persistence, and perseverance that Abraham displayed and that the friend in need in the parable employed. He gives us the assurance that God will not be irritated by our requests nor unwilling to meet them with generosity.

**Points for personal reflection and Practice:-** 1**) Prayer is essential for Christian family life.** To remain faithful in marriage, the spouses must pray, not only individually, but together. They need to thank God and offer intercessory prayers for each other, for their children, and for their dear ones. Daily prayer will help married couples to celebrate and reverence God’s vision of human sexuality and honour life from conception to natural death. Here is St. John Marie Vianney’s advice to a couple: *“Spend three minutes praising and thanking God for all you have. Spend three minutes asking God’s pardon for your sins and presenting your needs before Him. Spend three minutes reading the Bible and listening to God in silence. And do this every day.”* St.John Chriystom asks, *“When” can we pray?”*and answers,*“It is possible to offer fervent prayer even while walking in public…or seated in your shop…while buying and selling…or even while cooking.*[*CCC #2743.*] The important thing is, DO IT! BELIEVE the words in today’s Responsorial Psalm (Ps. 138:1-3,6-8).

2)  **We need to avoid giving lame reasons why we don’t pray.** Modern Christians give four lame excuses for not praying.   a) The first excuse: **We are too busy**. The richer a culture is, the less time it has for prayer, because money and wealth provide distractions. Researchers say that**the average Christian living in a wealthy country prays four minutes a day**. Often the first thing given up by a busy Christian is his prayer life. b) **A second excuse: We don’t believe prayer does that much good,** other than giving us psychological motivation to be better persons.  But besides giving us psychological motivation, prayer establishes and augments our relationship with God, the source of our power. c) **A third excuse: W**e think a loving God should provide for us and protect us from the disasters of life, such as disease or accidents, without our asking Him.  Prayer expresses our awareness of our need for God and our dependence on Him. **d) A fourth excuse**: **We think prayer is boring.** People who use this excuse forget the fact that prayer is a conversation with God: listening to God speaking to us through the Bible, and talking to God.  You can’t have a close relationship with anyone, including God, without persistent and intimate conversation. Four minutes a day is not much intimate conversation! Since our society concludes that prayer doesn’t work, it turns to sex, violence, and unhealthy addictions resulting in broken marriages, broken families, psychological problems, moral decadence, spiritual poverty, law-and-order problems, and increased prison populations.

**Gospel Exegesis:** **Luke’s version and Matthew’s version:** Matthew’s version of the Lord’s Prayer is given in the context of the Sermon on the Mount as part of Jesus’ teaching on how to pray, while Luke’s version is set in one of those occasions just after our Lord had been at prayer. Luke’s version of the Lord’s Prayer is shorter than the more familiar version found in Matthew’s Gospel. However, it teaches us all we need to know about how to pray and what to pray for.  It has only five petitions while Mathew adds two more (“*Your will be done…”* and *“deliver us from the evil one.”)* The first two petitions have to do with praise and worship of God, while   the next three petitions present to Him our needs – daily bread, forgiveness, and protection against the evil one. The Church uses the longer form of the Lord’s Prayer.

**The structure of the *Our Father***: The prayer consists of two parts. In the first part, we praise and worship God and express our ardent desire for His rule in human hearts, especially our own, enabling us to do His will in the most perfect way. In the second part, we present our needs before God our Father with filial love and trusting Faith. We offer before God our present (*daily bread*), our past (*forgiveness of sins*), and our future (*protection against temptations*).  By this prayer we also invite the Trinitarian God into our lives: God the Father (the Creator and Provider), by asking for daily bread; God the Son (Jesus, our Savior and Redeemer), by requesting forgiveness of our sins; and God the Holy Spirit (the Counselor, Advocate, Paraclete), by asking for deliverance from temptations (“*the final test.”).*

**The petitions**: The petitions cover our present needs, the forgiveness of our past sins, and protection from future temptations. We need not only bodily nourishment, but also daily spiritual nourishment, so that we may be strong enough to forgive those who offend us.    In the next petition, Jesus links the giving and receiving of forgiveness.  If we expect God to forgive us, we must forgive one another *(“Forgive us our sins for we ourselves forgive everyone in debt to us*”). The last petition — “*and do not subject us to the final test*” — covers future trials and temptations. We need God’s protection both from the evil one (the devil) and from the evils in society that seek to destroy us.  It is quite appropriate for us to pray for deliverance from evil for ourselves, our loved ones, our community, our nation, and our world. Jesus gives us two pieces of great advice in today’s Gospel (Luke 11:1-13). First, he teaches us to keep it Simple and Meaningful. Never worry about “what” to say; just say what is in your heart. Second, Jesus teaches us to Trust that our Father hears and answers each and every prayer. There are no exceptions!

**Prayer: persistent and persevering: In** the second part of today’s Gospel, by presenting the parable of a friend in need, Jesus emphasizes our need for persistent and persevering prayer, acknowledging our total dependence on God. In the ancient Hebrew world, hospitality was the essence of one’s goodness.  To welcome a visitor without food and drink was unthinkable. A traveler who was traveling in the evening to avoid the heat of the afternoon, might well arrive late at night.  But the villagers used to go to bed early, as they had no electricity.  So, in this parable, when a man received unexpected guests late at night and found his cupboard bare, he went to his neighbor and woke him in order to borrow a loaf of bread.   In those days, people generally slept in one room, the children bedded down with the adults. Rising to answer the door would disrupt the whole family and hence the neighbor was reluctant to get up.   Finally, however, because of the persistence of his guest, he got up and gave bread to his neighbor. This parable does not mean that God is a reluctant giver. Rather it stresses the necessity of our persisting in prayer as the expression of our total dependence on God. Persevering in prayer helps us to purify our prayer, to make clear to ourselves our values and hopes, and to lead us to ask for what is really in our very best interests. St. Paul tells us to “*pray without ceasing”* (*1 Thes 5:16-17*); “*pray at all times*” (*Eph 6:18)*; *“be steadfast in prayer”* *(Col 4:2-6);* and “*pray constantly*” **(***1 Thes 5:16*). Jesus assures us, “*Knock and the door shall be opened” (Mt 7:7-8).*

**The misconception:** The parable teaches us that prayer is not like putting coins in a vending machine called “God” to get whatever we wish. We must not look upon God as a sort of genie who grants all our requests. God is our loving *Father*Who knows what to give, when to give, and how to give. This includes not only our daily bread to satisfy our physical hunger but also “bread” to satisfy our spiritual hunger. Prayer is a relationship — an intimate, loving, caring, parent-child relationship. The Greek text means: *“Ask and you will receive something good,”*–not just whatever we ask for. The New Testament Greek also instructs us, *“ask and keep on asking…seek and keep on seeking…knock and keep on knocking.”*Hence, we are to be persistent in declaring our trusting Faith and dependence on God. One thing that is sometimes overlooked in this story is that, like the story of Abraham bargaining with God for the lives of Lot and his family, this is primarily a story about intercessory prayer and a merciful God: one friend goes to another friend on *behalf of someone else.*

***“Prayer doesn’t change God; it changes me.”*** A colleague asked C.S. Lewis if he really thought he could change God with his prayer for the cure of his wife’s cancer. Lewis replied: *“Prayer doesn’t change God; it changes me.”* William McGill summed it up this way. *“The value of persistent prayer is not that God will hear us but that we will finally hear God.”*Keep in mind that Jesus has taught us to address God as Our Father.  A loving Father listens to his child, but does not blindly endorse every request.  Instead, the loving Father provides what is needed, including discipline. Venerable Servant of God Bishop Fulton J. Sheen has this comment on prayer: *“The man who thinks only of himself says prayers of petition. He who thinks of his neighbour says prayers of intercession. He who thinks only of loving and serving God says prayers of abandonment to God’s will, and that is the prayer of the saints.”* To pray is not to impose our will on God but to ask God to make us open to His will; in other words, we pray not to change God’s mind but for God to change ours. The Our Father is the *“summary of the whole Gospel“* (Tertullian) and it is the *“perfect prayer”* (St. Thomas Aquinas). “*The Lord’s Prayer is the most perfect of prayers… In it we ask, not only for all the things we can rightly desire, but also in the sequence that they should be desired. This prayer not only teaches us to ask for things, but also in what order we should desire them.” (St. Thomas Aquinas, as quoted in* *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, *#2763)*

**JOKES OF THE WEEK:-01) The Tavern and the power of prayer:**  A tale is told about a small town that had always been “dry.”  One day, however, a local businessman erected a tavern. A group of Christians from a local Church were concerned and they convened an all-night prayer meeting to ask God to intervene. It just so happened that shortly thereafter lightning struck the tavern burning it down to the ground. The owner of the bar sued the Church, claiming that the prayers of the congregation were responsible, but the Church hired a lawyer to argue in court that they were not responsible. —  The presiding judge, after his initial review of the case, stated, *“No matter how this case comes out, one thing is clear: the tavern owner believes in prayer and the Christians do not.”*

**02) God’s laughter:** How do you make God laugh? Tell him your plans. Robert Frost: *“Forgive, O Lord, my little jokes on Thee, and I’ll forgive Thy great big joke on me.”*

**Additional anecdotes:-**

**1)” *Lord, why on earth did I invite all these people to dinner?”*** At a small dinner party in the home of a church member, a pastor was invited to ask the blessing for the meal. Turning to the talkative six-year-old in the house, the pastor suggested she might like to do the blessing instead. The outgoing youngster now suddenly shy replied, *“I wouldn’t know what to say!” “Just say what you hear your Mommy say,”* said the pastor assuredly. With that the little girl folded her hands, bowed her head and said*, “Lord, why on earth did I invite all these people to dinner?”*

**2)*“But I thank you anyway!”:*** In the movie, *Shenandoah*, Jimmy Stewart plays a prosperous Quaker farmer during the Civil War. One night at the supper table, this widower and hard worker lets his feelings show as he asks the blessing. *“Bless this food, Lord. I ploughed the land, I planted the seed, I irrigated the fields. I harvested the crops, I canned it, I cooked it and I served it. It took a lot of work and I did it all. But I thank you anyway because I promised my wife on her deathbed I would for the children’s sake. Amen.”*

***3) “Could You please just touch me***?” A little girl was kneeling beside her bed. She said, *“Dear God, if You are there and You hear my prayer, could You please just touch me?”* Just then she felt a touch. She got so excited! She said, *“Thank You, God, for touching me!”* Then she looked up, saw her older sister, and got a little suspicious. *“Did you touch me?”* The sister answered, “*Yes, I did.” “What did you do that for?”* the little one asked. *”God told me to,”* was the reply.– God touches our lives during our prayers.

**4) Forgive us our trespasses:**  Edith Bunker, on the television show*All in the Family,*described the confessional boxes in the Catholic Church as *“telephone booths to God.”–* Well, they are not quite that. But every prayer must contain an element of confession. We are not all God means for us to be. We are finite creatures in every respect. We need His mercy, His compassion, His amazing grace. So, we pray for forgiveness and sometimes we need to pray for the ability to forgive.