



# Ask and you will receive

Meister Eckhart asks, "Who is the man whose prayers God always hears?" He answers, "God hears the man who appeals to God as God. When, however, man appeals to God, hoping for some worldly good, he is not appealing to God at all, but to what he is asking of God. He is trying to make God his servant. On this point, St. Augustine says: 'You pray to what you love, for true whole prayer is nothing but love!' Thus, we pray to what we love, and no one rightly prays to God but he who prays for God and has nothing on his mind but God." We struggle with what we want God to do and how we want our prayer validated. Meister Eckhart is correct. We often want God to be our servant. We further struggle with trusting that God knows what we need and that His will is best.

God's will is not some predetermined outcome of events that we must simply suggest. "Thy will be done" is not an invocation beckoning us to accept a particular state of affairs passively. Rather, it is the humble and confident placement of

ourselves in the presence of the God we seek, whom we call "Father." We must remember that God is the God of life and light. It is from nothing that God brings something and from the darkness that God brings life. Prayer allows us to seek the One we love with the assurance that all will be well regardless of what course the events of our lives take. God is not about passive submission but the humble trust of love.

That's what makes the Lord's Prayer the perfect prayer. It provides us with proper disposition and focus, putting in line all of the essential relationships of our lives. It celebrates and fosters the ever-deepening relationship of trust we have with our Creator. It also calls us to keep open the doors of love between our brothers and sisters with the power that comes with forgiveness. If in one's darkest hour they can find the resolve to fervently pray this perfect prayer of Jesus' conviction, then there is no doubt that God will hear their plea, reach out in love, and bring them ever closer to His heart. What more does one

## Everyday Stewardship

**When I called, you answered!**

Some of us have that friend about whom we are constantly discovering new things. Maybe we've known this person for ten or even twenty years, and one day at lunch we'll find out they're a direct descendant of a dead president or they once met a major celebrity.

"You never asked," they'll say with a shrug.

As annoying as this can be, it makes perfect sense, doesn't it? We never asked. There is something strangely sacred about the

act of asking for something. It requires humility. It requires grace. It requires us to be awake, to be aware, to be vulnerable.

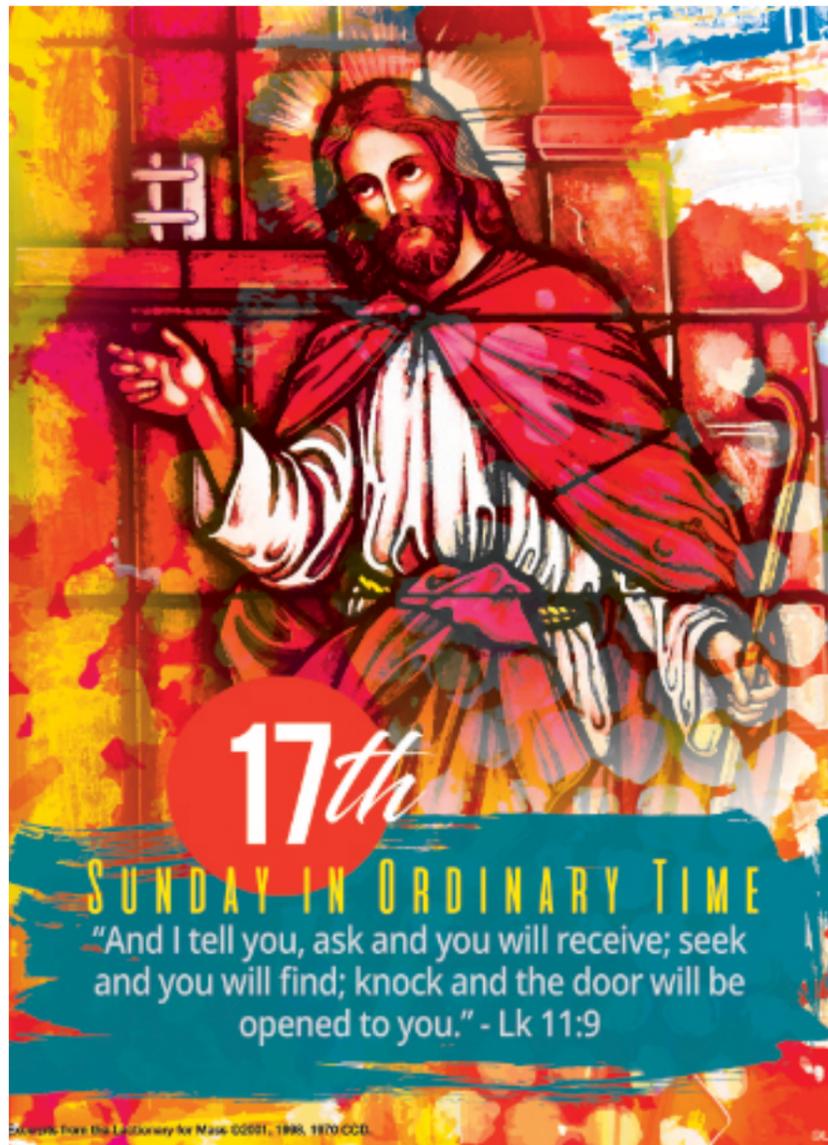
Too often we fall into a pattern of entitlement, even when it comes to information. We go through life thinking that a great cosmic conveyor belt of what we want is going to roll on past us, and we'll barely even have to extend our arms. We read our Bible and we hear all these amazing promises from the Father who loves us, and we get sort of complacent. He's got this, we

think, and we shut our eyes to take a snooze on the road trip of life, confident that someone else is going to look out for stop signs and wrong turns.

It's true: God's got this. He is going to take care of us. But He wants us to be in relationship with Him. He wants us to be an active, receptive participant in our own salvation. See his patience with Abraham's entreaties on behalf of the righteous of Sodom: He wants to answer, not simply to tell.

He wants us to stay awake for the drive.

— Tracy Earl Welliver, MTS



## Living the Paschal Mystery

In an early church writing called the *Didache* (The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles; probably second century), we have the first "commandment" about prayer: to pray the Our Father "as the Lord bid us in his gospel... pray in this way three times a day" (8:2, 3). The *Didache* doesn't say

when the three times a day are to be, but presumably at traditional prayer times: upon rising, at midday, upon retiring. This prayer has been in the hearts of Christians since the early disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. He gave them words. But he also gave them much more. Je-

## Live the Liturgy

Ultimately, what does God promise to give us when we pray? The short answer to that question is God. God promises to give Himself to us in prayer. Prayer is about union with God, not receiving favors. When God comes to us in prayer, His presence comes with faith, hope, and love. When we find these virtues enhanced and nurtured, we know that our prayer has been heard and answered. When we seek out, listen to, and live by these virtues we find

ourselves led back to God and more united with the Divine Presence. We struggle with what we want God to do and how we want our prayer validated. That's what makes Jesus' prayer, the Our Father, so perfect. It celebrates a deepening intimate relationship of trust between our Creator and us. When we persistently cry out for God in love, how can that prayer go unanswered?

sus, in this gospel, gives us a way to address God (as "Father"), how we ought to pray (with perseverance), and why we pray (because God gives us all "good gifts"). Jesus teaches us that prayer is and must be from oneself, very personal. Prayer is a gift of self.

Jesus' disciples want him to teach them to pray "just as John taught his disciples." Jesus couldn't teach them the prayer of John, however, because he was not John. He was himself, and would teach a prayer that is the very gift of himself to us. Jesus' prayer to his Father flows from who he is—the One who praises, intercedes, forgives, reconciles, and protects. In this he gives us a pattern for our prayer, even if we do not use these very words. Our prayer flows from our physical needs, our emotional attachments and relationships, our spiritual desires. In the end, however, Jesus' prayer is for his Father to "give the Holy Spirit." Then, no request is too great, no seeking is unrewarded, no door is locked. The Holy Spirit transforms our prayer—and us—into opening ourselves toward God, into allowing the prayer to change us into those who seek only what God desires for us.

The two examples that Jesus uses (neighbourly friendship and father-son kinship) reveal that what is always granted through prayer is deeper relationship with God and others. Jesus teaches us that the One to whom we pray is our "Father" whose love and care for us is unlimited. This deeply intimate and per-

sonal relationship with God inspires in us the confidence ("how much more...") to pray with "persistence" and the realisation that what we pray for is not so important as the fact that we address God in such intimate terms. The prayer always deepens our relationship with God and this is already an answer to what we need. The prayer transforms our relationship with each other—opening us to forgiveness and reconciliation—and this is surely an answer to who we are and wish to become.

There is nothing wrong with praying for specific needs; after all, we do it every Mass at the universal prayer (prayer of the faithful) and during the eucharistic prayer, not to mention our own personal and daily prayers of petition. This gospel challenges us to go beyond specific needs and get to the larger picture: a focus on the gifts God offers us all ways in prayer, and often in surprising and unexpected ways. What inspires confidence in us is not whether God gives us what we specifically ask for in prayer; our confidence comes from the Spirit who dwells within and establishes a most intimate relationship between God and us—shared Life.

Unlike small children who seem to have a capacity to stay endlessly with some tasks, most of us need to develop a habit of daily prayer. With such busy schedules, this can be difficult. Choosing a specific time and being persistent about honouring that time for prayer helps.





**First Reading**

“What if there are at least ten there?” He replied, “For the sake of those ten, I will not destroy it.” (Gn 18:32)

**Psalm:**

On the day I called, you answered me, O Lord.. (Ps 137[138])

**Second Reading:**

He brought you to life along with him, having forgiven us all our transgressions. (Col 2:13)

**Gospel Acclamation:**

Alleluia, alleluia! The Word was made flesh and lived among us: to all who did accept him he gave power to become children of God. Alleluia!

**Gospel:**

“And I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” (Luke 11:9)

# This Week

**24 SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C)**

Gn 18:20-32/Ps 138:1-2, 2-3, 6-7, 7-8 [3a]/Col 2:12-14/Lk 11:1-3  
08:00 **Morning Prayer** Mercy Chapel  
10:30 **Mass** St Mary's Rufina Eguia-Balnig (RIP)  
17:00 **Mass** St Mary's People of the Parish

**25 St James the Apostle**

2 Cor 4:7-15/Ps 126:1bc-2ab, 2cd-3, 4-5, 6/Mt 20:20-28  
08:00 **Morning Prayer** Mercy Chapel  
12:05 **Mass** St Mary's Mary Youll (RIP)  
17:15 **Evening Prayer** Mercy Chapel  
20:00 **Prayer Group** St Cecilia's

**26 Ss Joachim & Anne**

Jer 14:17-22/Ps 79:8, 9, 11 and 13/Mt 13:36-43  
08:00 **Morning Prayer** Mercy Chapel  
12:05 **Mass** St Mary's Ints. of Mama Stella  
13:00 **Over 60s** St Mary's Catholic Centre  
16:00 **Chosen Tuesday** Upper Room  
17:15 **Evening Prayer** Mercy Chapel

**27 Wednesday**

Jer 15:10, 16-21/Ps 59:2-3, 4, 10-11, 17-18/Mt 13:44-46  
08:00 **Morning Prayer** Mercy Chapel  
12:05 **Mass** St Mary's Ints of Gerry Garraghan  
17:15 **Evening Prayer** Mercy Chapel

**28 Thursday**

Jer 18:1-6/Ps 146:1b-2, 3-4, 5-6ab/Mt 13:47-53  
08:00 **Morning Prayer** Mercy Chapel  
10:00 **Open House** St Mary's Catholic Centre  
10:15 **Confessions** St Cecilia's  
10:30 **Mass** St Cecilia's Priest's Intention  
12:05 **Mass** St Mary's Thanksgiving (48 & 60<sup>th</sup> B'day)  
17:00 **Evening with Jesus and Friends** Mercy Chapel

**29 Ss Martha, Mary & Lazarus**

Jer 26:1-9/Ps 69:5, 8-10, 14/In 11:19-27 or Lk 10:38-42  
08:00 **Morning Prayer** Mercy Chapel  
12:05 **Mass** St Mary's Fr Dermott Donnelly (RIP)  
17:15 **Evening Prayer** Mercy Chapel

**30 Saturday**

Jer 26:11-16, 24/Ps 69:15-16, 30-31, 33-34/Mt 14:1-12  
08:00 **Morning Prayer** Mercy Chapel  
10:30 **Confessions** St Mary's  
11:00 **Mass** St Mary's Holy Souls  
11:45 **Confessions** St Mary's  
18:00 **Vigil Mass** St Cecilia's Thanksgiving for Graduation

**31 EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C)**

Ecc 1:2; 2:21-23/Ps 90:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14, 17 [1]/Col 3:1-5, 9-11/Lk 12:13-21  
08:00 **Morning Prayer** Mercy Chapel  
10:30 **Mass** St Mary's People of the Parish  
17:00 **Mass** St Mary's Nancy Devine (RIP)

## Announcements

**Fr Dermott's Funeral**

Due to the limited pace in the Cathedral, those who wish to participate at Fr Dermott's funeral on Friday at 12.05 are requested to gather at St Michael's Church, Westmorland Road, where the Mass will be live-streamed and Holy Communion made available. Following the Requiem Mass, Fr Dermott's cortège will pass by St Michael's.

**Famine in Panyangara**

We've heard from our sister parish in Panyangara that the problems with food insecurity have escalated to a famine. People struggling to feed their families and some

attention. There is more information on the parish website: [sunderlandcatholic.com](http://sunderlandcatholic.com) where you can see photographs and read about what's happening from Fr Ignatius. We've already sent them some money for immediate relief and over the next few weeks we'll be collecting after Mass. Any money we receive will be sent straight to the parish so they can buy grain to hand out to those in need.

Our project last Lent was to provide eco-stoves for the people there and the parish was busy having these made; however, the famine has overtaken this and needs our immediate

**Our Lady of Mercy Parish**

27 Bridge Street, Sunderland, SR1 1TQ  
(0191) 567 5354  
[sunderland.ourladyofmercy@rcdhn.org.uk](mailto:sunderland.ourladyofmercy@rcdhn.org.uk)  
[www.sunderlandcatholic.com](http://www.sunderlandcatholic.com)  
St Mary's Church • 27 Bridge Street • Sunderland • SR1 1TQ  
St Cecilia's Church • Ryhope Road • Sunderland • SR2 7TG

Fr Christopher Hancock MHM • Parish Priest • [christopher@sunderlandcatholic.com](mailto:christopher@sunderlandcatholic.com)  
Fr Emmanuel Nuh Mbeh MHM • Assistant Priest • [emmanuel.mbeh@diocesehn.org.uk](mailto:emmanuel.mbeh@diocesehn.org.uk)  
Fr Philip Adede MHM • Assistant Priest • [philip.adede@diocesehn.org.uk](mailto:philip.adede@diocesehn.org.uk)  
Rev Eddy Barker • Parish Deacon

Rebecca Leighton • Lay University Chaplain • [rebecca@sunderlandcatholic.com](mailto:rebecca@sunderlandcatholic.com)  
Canon Alec Barras • Bishop Séamus Cunningham



Bernadette, Jean Maureen, Christopher, Paula, Peter, Emilia, Jean, Teresa, Cath, the sick sisters at Oaklea, David, Marion, Dave, Neil, Paul, Andrew, Jacob, Stella, David, Alisa, Susan, Mary, Jack, Richard, Margaret, Maura, Colin, Gerry, Nick, Maureen and Stella.



Fr Michael Keoghan, Fr Dermott Donnelly, Maud Todd

*Let us know if you would like a name added to the list.*

## Questions for the Week

**First Reading:** In his dialogue with the Lord, Abraham questions the idea of justice and divine retribution. What questions do you have for the Lord?  
**Second Reading:** Paul encouraged the Gentile believers in the city of Colossae to understand that all who have faith in Jesus (Jews and Gentiles alike) share in the death and resurrection of Jesus. How do you help fel-

low Christians who feel disenfranchised?  
**Gospel:** Jesus teaches his disciples to be persistent and bold in their prayers to the Father. How would you characterise your prayer life?

## Why do we do that?



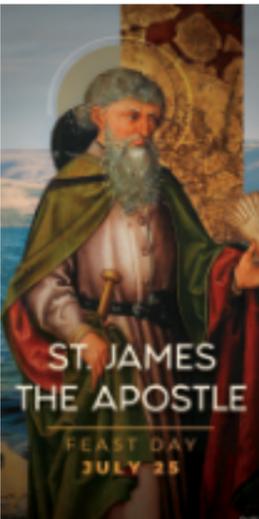
**Question:** What can I do to help our family practice our faith each day?  
**Answer:** Some families prac-

tice their religion together as just another event on their schedule: go to church, observe Lent, help at the parish picnic, go to a meeting, volunteer time, make your confession, use your envelope... But the focus needs to be on who we are—God's people, in relationship with him, loved, forgiven, and redeemed, and called to live and proclaim the Gospel. Our

awareness of God's presence and our sense of mission are supported by the daily rituals, celebrations, and traditions that help us stay focused. Sharing our faith strengthens us and clarifies the beliefs and values of Christian living. Daily family practices include time for prayer—before meals, before bed, before important meetings and activities. Attend Sunday Mass together and discuss the homily afterward. Create family celebrations for holy days and holidays. Make religion a regu-

lar part of your discussions. Include others, especially the elderly and the less fortunate, in your activities and charitable efforts. By applying the virtues of faith, hope, and love to each day, faith becomes part of who your family is. It influences how you act towards others, what you value, and how mindful of God you are. Faith is the leaven of life that helps all of us rise to our calling and dignity as God's people.

## Saint of the Week



Saint James the Apostle is also called James, son of Zebedee, or James the

Greater to distinguish him from the other James in Jesus' group of twelve. Most of what we know about Saint James is recorded in the New Testament. He and his brother John were collected by Jesus along the sea of Galilee. Matthew 4:18-22 tells the story of Jesus calling first Simon Peter and his brother Andrew and then the sons of Zebedee. In Mark 3:17 the brothers receive a nickname from Jesus who calls them "sons of thunder" because of their many extreme reactions, like that in Luke 9:54 when

they offer to call down fire on a Samaritan village. Saint James was part of Jesus' intimate circle, a witness to the Transfiguration, the resurrection of Jarius' daughter, and the agony in the garden of Gethsemane. In A.D. 44 Herod Agrippa had "James, the brother of John, killed by the sword." (Acts 12:2) He is the only apostle whose martyrdom is written of in the New Testament. According to Spanish tradition, his body was taken to Santiago de Compostela, Spain where his relics were

rediscovered in 9th century. This tradition has sometimes been attributed to a passage in the Song of Roland which tells of St. James appearing to Charlemagne in a dream, prophesying that Charlemagne would conquer the Moors in Spain. This was followed by a vision of stars which if followed would lead to the saint's lost tomb. In the Middle Ages Compostela was a hugely popular pilgrimage site. The saint's relics continue to rest in the cathedral there and one can still undertake the pilgrimage.

## Flock Notes

Jesus makes it sound so easy: 'ask and you'll receive, seek and you'll find.' But what about all those times you asked and didn't receive, all those times you went looking and didn't find? What's going on there?

I don't just mean all those times you prayed to win the lottery or for something bad to happen to someone who hurt you—I don't think any of us actu-

ally expect those prayers to be answered—but what about the prayers for someone to recover from an illness, and they didn't; or that time you really needed that job and didn't get it? What about those times we asked for something good and the answer was 'no'? Sometimes, we forget the difference between what we want and what we need. We're all keenly aware

of what we *want*, but what we *need* requires a larger perspective, which we don't always have.

God knows what we *need* to flourish in this life and be happy with in the next. Unfortunately for us, that doesn't always correspond with what we think we *want*. Sometimes God's answer to our prayers is 'no, I've got something much better in mind for you!'

