

Thursday of the Eleventh Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 6,7-15): Jesus said to his disciples, «When you pray, do not use a lot of words, as the pagans do, for they hold that the more they say, the more chance they have of being heard. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need, even before you ask him.

»This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, holy be your name, your kingdom come and your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts just as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us. Do not bring us to the test but deliver us from the evil one’. If you forgive others their wrongs, your Father in heaven will also forgive yours. If you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive you either».

«Your Father knows what you need, even before you ask him»

Fr. Emili MARLÉS i Romeu
(Sant Cugat del Vallès, Barcelona, Spain)

Today the Lord wants to help us grow in a main issue of our Christian life: the prayer. He warns us not to pray like pagans trying to convince God about what they want. Many times we try to achieve what we want through insistence, being "annoying" to God, believing that we will be heard with our verbosity. The Lord reminds us that the Father is constantly solicitous of our life and that he knows what we need before we ask him at all times, (cf. Mt 6,8). Do we live with this kind of confidence? Am I aware that the Father is constantly washing my feet and that he knows better than anyone what I need at all times (in big things and small things)?

Jesus opens for us a new horizon of prayer: the prayer of those who address to God with the conscience of being children. The type of relationship I have with a person

is determined through the way I ask for things to that person , and also what I can expect from him. From a father, and especially from the heavenly Father, I can expect everything and I know that he takes care of my life. For this reason, Jesus, who always lives as a true son, is telling you: "not to be worried about food and drink for yourself" (Mt 6.25). Do I really have this son's consciousness? Am I addressing God with the same familiarity as I do with my father or mother?

Later, Jesus opens his heart to us, and teaches us what his relationship / prayer with the Father is like so that we also make it ours. With the "Our Father" prayer Jesus teaches us to live as children. Saint Cyprian has a well-known comment about the "Our Father", telling us: «We must remember and know that, when we call God "Father", we have to act as his children, in order for him to be pleased with us, as we are pleased to have him as Father ».

«If you forgive others their wrongs, your Father in heaven will also forgive yours»

+ Fr. Joan MARQUÉS i Suriñach
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Today, Jesus proposes us a great and difficult target: to forgive those who offend us. And He establishes a very reasonable measure: ours: «If you forgive others their wrongs, your Father in heaven will also forgive yours. If you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive you either» (Mt 6:14-15). In another place, He had already given us the Golden Rule of human coexistence: «In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this sums up the Law and the Prophets» (Mt 7:12).

We want God to forgive us and would like others to forgive us too; but, on the other hand, we seem quite reluctant to do it ourselves. To apologize is kind of difficult; but to forgive is even more so. Should we be humbler, it should not be so difficult; but our pride makes it much harder. This is why we could establish the following equation: the humbler, the easier; the prouder, the more difficult. This will give us a clue to find out our degree of humility.

When the Spanish Civil War was over (year 1939), some ex-captive priests were celebrating a thanksgiving mass in a small town, somewhere in Spain. The officiating priest, after saying the words of the Lord's Prayer «and forgive us our debts», he remained speechless and was unable to go on. He could not drive himself to forgive those who had made them suffer so much in a hard labor camp, in that very same town. After a few moments of a most impressive silence, he went on with

the prayer: «as we forgive our debtors». Afterwards, they asked themselves which homily had been the best one. And they all agreed: the silence of the officiating priest when he was saying the Lord's Prayer. It is difficult, but with the Lord's help it is possible.

Furthermore, God's forgiveness is total; it gets as far as oblivion. We tend to forget pretty soon the favours we receive, but not so much so with offenses... If married couples knew how to forget them, they would avoid, and probably overcome, many family dramas.

Let us hope the Mother of mercy helps us understanding our fellow men and forgiving them totally.