Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

Gospel text (*Lk* 11:1-13): Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread and forgive us our sins for we ourselves forgive everyone in debt to us, and do not subject us to the final test."

And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend to whom he goes at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, for a friend of mine has arrived at my house from a journey and I have nothing to offer him,' and he says in reply from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked and my children and I are already in bed. I cannot get up to give you anything.' I tell you, if he does not get up to give the visitor the loaves because of their friendship, he will get up to give him whatever he needs because of his persistence.

"And I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. What father among you would hand his son a snake when he asks for a fish? Or hand him a scorpion when he asks for an egg? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?"

"Jesus was praying… 'Lord, teach us to pray'"

Fr. Jean GOTTIGNY
(Bruxelles, Belgium)

Today, Jesus' praying teaches us how to pray. Let's pay great attention to what His attitude teaches us. Quite often, Jesus Christ feels the need to meet face-to-face with His Father. In his Gospel, Luke emphasizes this point.

What were they talking about that day? We do not know. On the other hand, somewhere else, we have

located a fragment of a conversation between his Father and Himself. It was when He was baptized in the Jordan River, and He was in prayer, “And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased’” (Lk 3:22). It is an intermission in a tenderly affectionate dialogue.

When in today's Gospel, one of the disciples, realizing His meditation, begs Him to teach them how to speak with God, Jesus replies: "When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name…” (Lk 11:2). The prayer consists of a filial conversation with this Father that loves us madly. Teresa of Avila defined a prayer as “nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us.”

Benedict XVI finds it “significant for Luke to place the Lord's Prayer in the context of Jesus' personal prayer. Thus, he lets us share his praying; He takes us inside the intimate dialogue of Trinitarian love. In other words, He lifts our human weaknesses up to the very heart of God.”

It is notable that, in our current language, the prayer Jesus Christ taught us may be encapsulated in these two single words: ‘Our Father’. The Christian prayer is eminently filial.

The Catholic liturgy places this prayer upon our lips as we prepare to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. The seven petitions it contains, and their sequence, gives us an idea as to the kind of behavior we need to adopt when we receive the Holy Communion.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “He wants me to love him because he has forgiven me, not much, but everything. He has not waited for me to love him very much, but he has wanted me to know to what extent He has loved me, so that I love him madly!” (Saint Therese of Lisieux)

- “The Lord tells us how we are to pray. Luke puts the ‘Our Father’ in relation with the personal prayer of Jesus himself. He makes us participants in His own prayer; He invites us into the interior dialogue of the Trinitarian Love” (Benedict XVI)

- “The prayer that comes to us from Jesus is truly unique: it is ‘of the Lord.’ On the one hand, in the words of this prayer the only Son gives us the words the Father gave him: He is the master of our prayer. On the other, as Word incarnate, He knows in his human heart the needs of his human brothers and sisters and reveals them to us: He is the model of our prayer.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No.2,765)