Thursday of the Twenty-seventh Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Lk* 11:5-13): Jesus said to his disciples: “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 him 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?”

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Fr. Josep Mª MASSANA i Mola OFM
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today the Gospel is a catechesis from Jesus on prayer. He solemnly assures us that the Father always listens: “ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you” (Lk 11:9).

At times, we might think that experience shows otherwise—that prayer doesn’t always “work” that way. But the truth is, we must pray with the right dispositions!

The first is constancy—perseverance. We are called to pray without losing heart, even if it seems that our prayer meets resistance or that it is not answered immediately. This is the lesson of the man who goes at midnight to ask his friend for bread. By his persistence, he receives what he needs. God is that friend who

listens from within to the one who remains constant. We must trust that He will eventually grant what we ask, because He is not only Friend, but Father.

The second attitude Jesus teaches is trust and childlike love. God's fatherhood goes infinitely beyond human fatherhood, which is always limited and imperfect: "If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven …?" (Lk 11:13).

The third: we must ask above all for the Holy Spirit, and not only for material things. Jesus urges us to ask for the Spirit, assuring us that we will receive Him: "… how much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?" (Lk 11:13). This prayer is always answered. To ask for the Spirit is really to ask for the gift of prayer itself, since the Holy Spirit is its source and origin.

Blessed Brother Giles of Assisi, companion of St. Francis, summed up this Gospel teaching when he said: "Pray faithfully and devotedly, because a grace God has not granted you once, He may grant to you some other time. On your part, humbly place your whole mind in God, and God will place his grace in you, as and when He pleases."

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "Your truth told us to cry out, and we should be answered; to knock, and it would be opened to us; to beg, and it would be given to us. Oh! Eternal Father, Your servants do cry out to Your mercy; do You then reply" (Santa Catalina de Siena)

- "When we need help, Jesus does not tell us to resign ourselves and close ourselves off, but rather to turn to the Father and ask him with confidence. All our needs, from the most evident, daily ones" (Francis)

- "The Holy Spirit who teaches the Church and recalls to her all that Jesus said also instructs her in the life of prayer, inspiring new expressions of the same basic forms of prayer: blessing, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2644)