

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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Today, the Gospel is a catechesis by Jesus on prayer. He solemnly asserts that the Father always listens to Him: “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 may think that reality indicates this is not always the case, that it does not actually “work” in such a way. This is because we must want to pray with an attitude adequate to an effective prayer!

The first premise is dedication and perseverance. We must pray avoiding feeling disheartened, even if we think our prayer is being ignored, or is not given heed to, right away. This is the attitude of that inappropriate man calling on his friend's home, in the middle of the night, to request a favor. With his doggedness he will get the loaves he needs. God is the friend who listens from within to whoever is persistent enough. We must believe that He will give us what we are asking, because in addition to being a friend, He is also our Father.

The second stipulation Jesus teaches us is confidence and filial love. God's paternity goes far beyond man's paternity, which is 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 one: above all we must ask for the Holy Spirit and not only for material things. Jesus encourages us to invoke Him, assuring us we shall receive it: “... how much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?” (Lk 11:13). This petition is always listened to. It is very much like asking the grace of the prayer, as the Holy Spirit is its source and its origin.

The blessed Fra Giles of Assisi, one of St. Francis' friars and friends, summarizes the idea of this Gospel when he says: “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

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"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)

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"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)

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"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)